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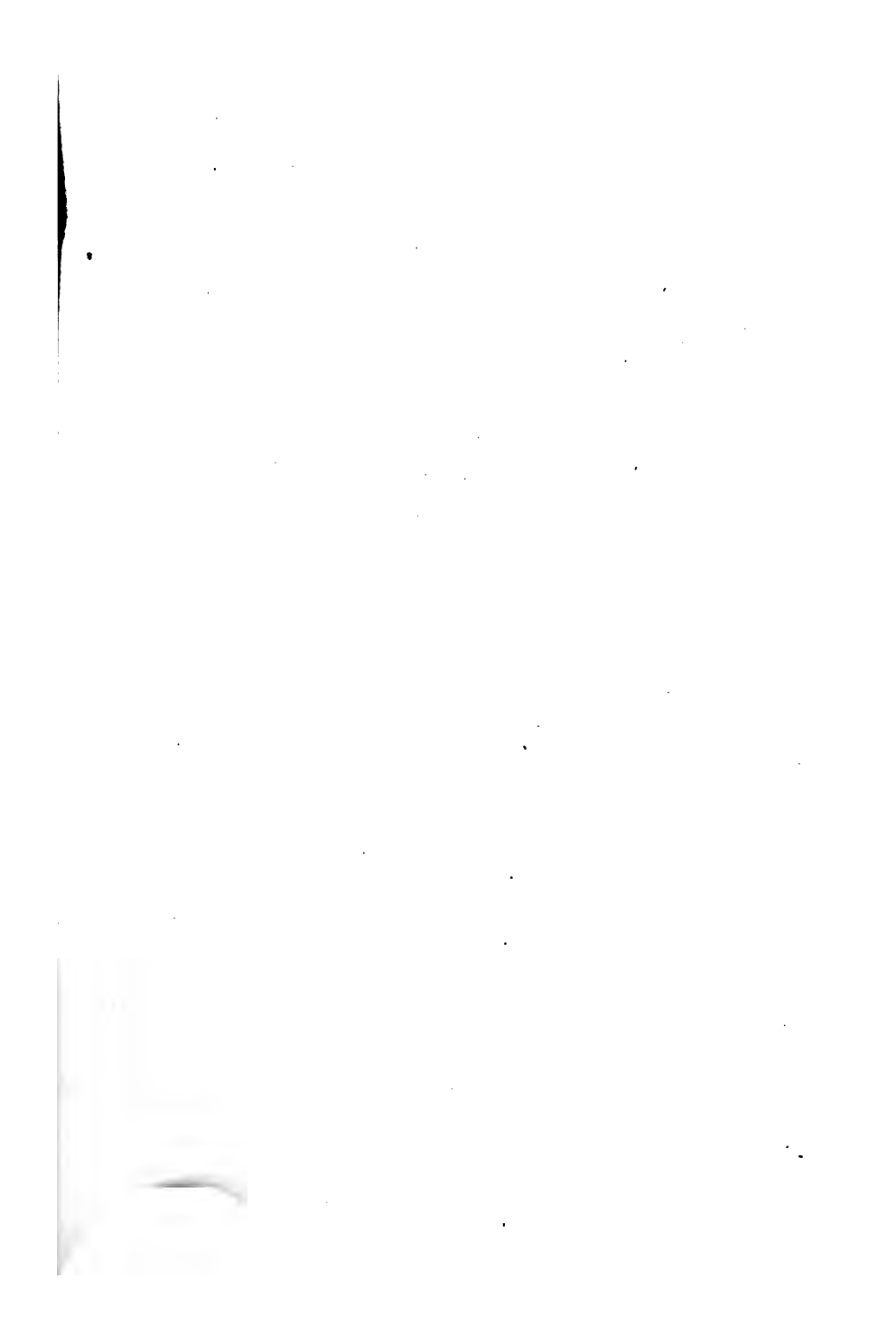


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ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS

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For 1951



**A DAUGHTER OF THE  
MORNING**







Cosma



# DAUGHTER OF THE MORN

*By*

ZONA GALE

*Author of*

Friendship Village, When I Was a Little Girl  
Neighborhood Stories, etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

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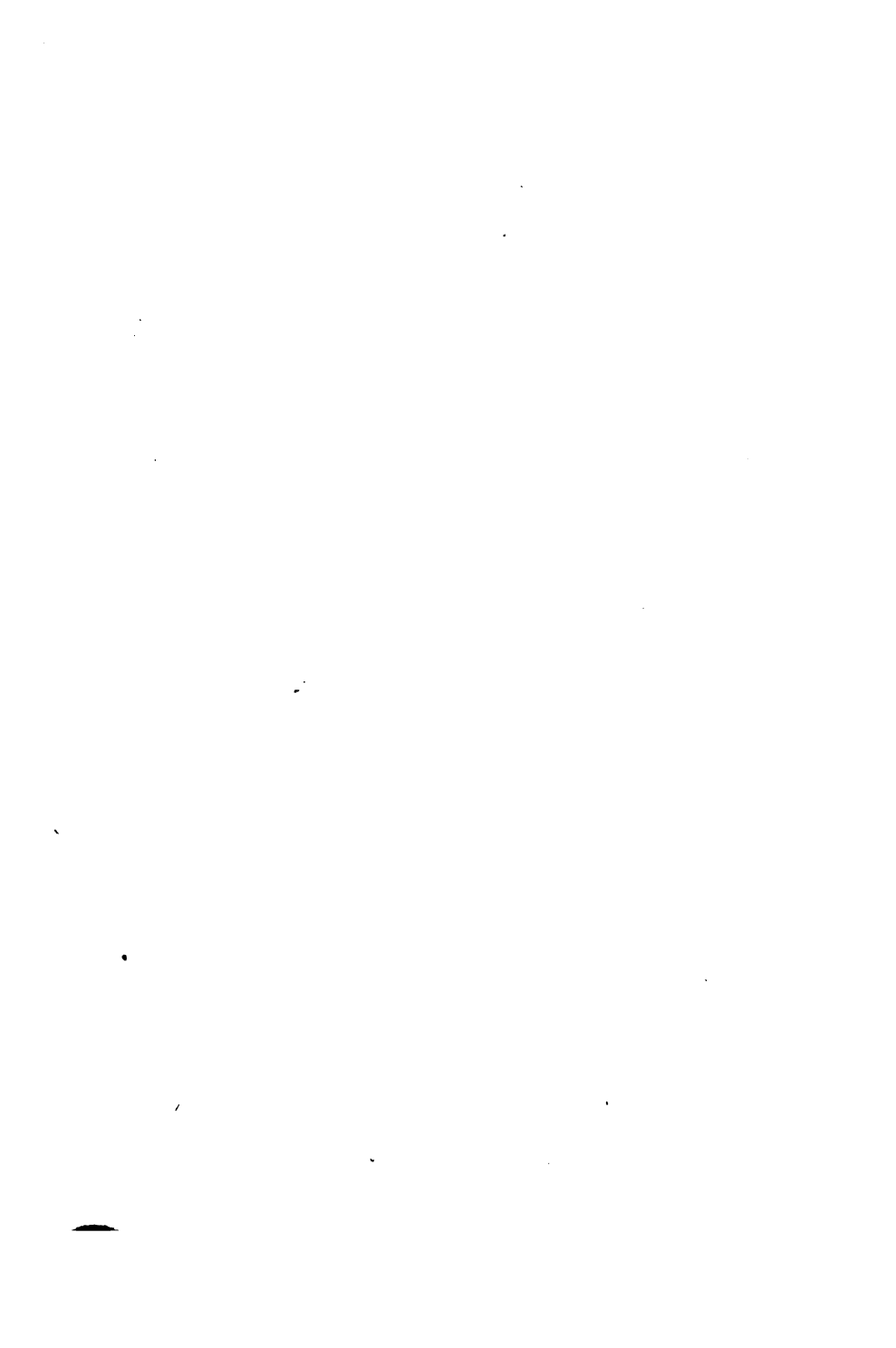
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**A DAUGHTER OF THE  
MORNING**



# A Daughter of the Morning

## CHAPTER I

I FOUND this paper on the cellar shelf. It come around the boys' new overalls. When I was cutting it up in sheets with the butcher knife on the kitchen table, Ma come in, and she says :

"What you doin' *now?*"

The way she says "now" made me feel like I've felt before—mad and ready to fly. So I says it right out, that I'd meant to keep a secret. I says :

"I'm makin' me a book."

"Book!" she says. "For the receipts you know?" she says, and laughed like she knows how. I hate cooking, and she knows it.

## 10 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I went on tying it up.

"Be writing a book next, I s'pose," says Ma, and laughed again.

"It ain't that kind of a book," I says. "This is just to keep track."

"Well, you'd best be doing something useful," says Ma. "Go out and pull up some radishes for your Pa's supper."

I went on tying up the sheets, though, with pink string that come around Pa's patent medicine. When it was done I run my hand over the page, and I liked the feeling on my hand. Then I saw Ma coming up the back steps with the radishes. I was going to say something, because I hadn't gone to get them, but she says:

"Nobody ever tries to save me a foot of travelin' around."

And then I didn't care whether I said it or not. So I kept still. She washed off the radishes, bending over the sink that's in too low. She'd wet the front of her skirt with some suds of something she'd washed out, and her cuffs was wet, and her hair was coming down.

"It's rack around from morning till night,"

she says, "doing for folks that don't care about anything so's they get their stomachs filled."

"You might talk," I says, "if you was Mis' Keddie Bingy."

"Why? Has anything more happened to her?" Ma asked.

"Nothing new," I says. "Keddie was drinking all over the house last night. I heard him singing and swearing—and once I heard her scream."

"He'll kill her yet," says Ma. "And then she'll be through with it. I'm so tired to-night I wisht I was dead. All day long I've been at it—floors to mop, dinner to get, water to lug."

"Quit going on about it, Ma," I says.

"You're a pretty one to talk to me like that," says Ma.

She set the radishes on the kitchen table and went to the back door. One of her shoes dragged at the heel, and a piece of her skirt hung below her dress.

"Jim!" she shouted, "your supper's ready. Come along and eat it,"—and stood there twisting her hair up.

## 12 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Pa come up on the porch in a minute. His feet were all mud from the fields, and the minute he stepped on Ma's clean floor she begun on him. He never said a word, but he tracked back and forth from the wash bench to the water pail, making his big black footprints every step. I should think she *would* have been mad. But she said what she said about half a dozen times—not mad, only just whining and complaining and like she expected it. The trouble was, she said it so many times.

"When you go on so, I don't care how I track up," says Pa, and dropped down to the table. He filled up his plate and doubled down over it, and Ma and I got ours.

"What was you and Stacy talkin' about so long over the fence?" Ma says, after a while.

"It's no concern of yours," says Pa. "But I'll tell ye, just to show ye what some women have to put up with. Keddie Bingy hit her over the head with a dish in the night. It's laid her up, and he's down to the Dew Drop Inn, filling himself full."

"She's used to it by this time, I guess," Ma



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 13

says. "Just as well take it all at once as die by inches, *I say.*"

"Trot out your pie," says Pa.

As soon as I could after we'd done the dishes, I took my book up to the room. Ma and I slept together. Pa had the bedroom off the dining-room. I had the bottom bureau drawer to myself for my clothes. I put my book in there, and I found a pencil in the machine drawer, and I put that by it. I'd wanted to make the book for a long time, to set down thoughts in, and keep track of the different things. But I didn't feel like making the book any more by the time I got it all ready. I went to laying out my underclothes in the drawer so's the lace edge would show on all of 'em that had it.

Ma come to the side door and called me.

"Cossy," she says, "is Luke comin' to-night?"

"I s'pose so," I says.

"Well, then, you go right straight over to Mis' Bingy's before he gets here," Ma says.

I went down the stairs—they had a blotched

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## 14 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

carpet that I hated because it looked like raw meat and gristle.

"Why don't you go yourself?" I says.

"Because Mis' Bingy'll be ashamed before me," she says; "but she won't think you know about it. Take her this."

I took the loaf of steam brown bread.

"If Luke comes," I says, "have him walk along after me."

The way to Mis' Bingy's was longer to go by the road, or short through the wood-lot. I went by the road, because I thought maybe I might meet somebody. The worst of the farm wasn't only the work. It was never seein' anybody. I only met a few wagons, and none of 'em stopped to say anything. Lena Curtsy went by, dressed up in black-and-white, with a long veil. She looks like a circus rider, not only Sundays but every day. But Luke likes the look of her, he said so.

"You're goin' the wrong way, Cossy!" she calls out.

"No, I ain't, either," I says, short enough. I can't bear the sight of her. And yet, if I

have anything to brag about, it's always her I want to brag it to.

Just when I turned off to Bingy's, I met the boys. We never waited supper for 'em, because sometimes they get home and sometimes they don't. They were coming from the end of the street-car line, black from the blast furnace.

"Where you goin', kid?" says Bert.

I nodded to the house.

"Well, then, tell her she'd better watch out for Bingy," says Henny. "He's crazy drunk down to the Dew Drop. I wouldn't stay there if I was her."

I ran the rest of the way to the Bingy house. I went round to the back door. Mis' Bingy was in the kitchen, sitting on the edge of the bed. She had the bed put up in the kitchen when the baby was born, and she'd kept it there all the year. When I stepped on to the boards, she jumped and screamed.

"Here's some steam brown bread," I says.

She set down again, trembling all over. The baby was laying over back in the bed, and it

## 16 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

woke up and whimpered. Mis' Bingy kind of poored it with one hand, and with the other she pushed up the bandage around her head. She was big and wild-looking, and her hair was always coming down in a long, coiled-up mess on her shoulders. Her hands looked worse than Ma's.

"I guess I look funny, don't I?" she says, trying to smile. "I cut my head open some—by accident."

I hate a lie. Not because it's wicked so much as because it never fools anybody.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "I know that Mr. Bingy threw a dish at you last night and cut your head open, because he was drunk. Well, I just met Henny, and he says he's down to the Inn, crazy drunk. Henny don't want you should stay here."

She kind of give out, as though her spine wouldn't hold up. I guess she had the idea none of the neighbors knew.

"Where can I go?" she says.

There was only one place that I could think of. "Come on over with me," I says. "Pa

and the boys are there. They won't let him hurt you."

She shook her head. "I'd have to come back some time," she says.

"Why would you?" I asked her.

She looked at me kind of funny.

"He's my husband," she says—and she kind of straightened up and looked dignified, without meaning to. I just stood and looked at her. Think of it making her look like that to own that drunken coward for a husband!

"What if he is?" I says. "He's a brute, and we all know it."

She cried a little. "You hadn't ought to speak to me so," she says. "If I go, how'll I earn my living, and the baby's?" she says.

I hadn't thought of that. "That's so," I says. "You are tied, ain't you?"

I couldn't get her to come with me. She's got the bed made up in the front room upstairs, and she was going up there that night and lock her door, and leave the kitchen open.

"He may not be so bad," she says. "Maybe he'll be so drunk he'll tumble on the bed asleep,

## 18 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

or maybe he'll be sick. I always hope for one of them."

I went back through the wood-lot. It was so different out there from home and Mis' Bingy's that it felt good. I found a place in a book once that told about the woods. It gave me a nice feeling. I used to get it out of the school library whenever it was in and read the place over, to get the feeling again. Almost always it gave it to me. In the real woods I didn't always get it. They come so close up to me that they bothered me. I always thought I was going to get to something, and I never did. And yet I always liked it in the wood-lot. And it was nice to be away from home and from Mis' Bingy's.

I forgot the whole bunch of 'em for a while. It was the night of a moon, and you could see it in the trees, like a big fat' face that was friends with you. When a bird did just one note, it felt pleasant. After a while I stopped still, because it seemed as if something was near to me; but I wasn't scared, even if it was quite dark. I thought to myself that I wisht

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 19

my family and all the folks I knew was still and kept to themselves same as the trees does, instead of rushing at you every minute, out loud. I never knew any folks that acted different from that, though. Luke was just like that, too.

I was thinking of this when I see him coming to meet me, down the path. He ain't a big man, Luke.

"Hello, Cossy," he says. "That you?"

"Hello, Luke," I says. I dunno why it is—with the boys at home I can joke. But Luke, he always makes me feel just plain. I just says "Hello, Luke," and stood still, and waited for him to come up to me. He turned and walked along beside me.

"I was afraid I wouldn't meet you," he says. "I was afraid I'd miss you. My, it's a good thing to get you somewheres by yourself."

"Why?" I says.

"Oh, the boys are always around, or your pa, or somebody. I've got a right to talk to you sometimes by yourself."

"Well, go ahead, then. Talk to me."

## 20 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

All of a sudden he stopped still in the path.

"Do you mean that?" he ask.

"Mean what?" I says. I couldn't think what he meant.

"That I can talk to you now? My way?"

"Oh," I says. I knew then. I guess I should have known before, if I'd stopped to think. But someway I never could put my mind on Luke all the time he was saying anything.

"Cossy," he says, "I've tried to talk to you; you always got round it or else somebody else come in. You know what I want."

I didn't say anything. I sort of waited, not so much to see what he was going to do as to see what I was going to do.

Then he didn't say anything. But he put his arm around me, and put his hand around my arm. I let him. I wasn't mad, so I didn't pretend.

"Let's us sit down here," he says.

We sat under a big tree and he drew my head down on his shoulder.

"You're all kinds of a peach," he says,



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 21

"that's what you are, Cossy—I bet you've known for weeks I want you to marry me. Ain't you?"

"Yes," I says, "I s'pose I have."

He laughed. "You're a funny girl," he says.

"It's silly to pretend," I says.

"You bet," he says, "it's silly to pretend. Give me a kiss, then. Kiss me yourself."

I did. I had to see whether I was pretending not to want to, or whether I really didn't want to. I see right away that I didn't want to.

"Marry me, Cossy," he says. "Will you?"

I was twenty years old. For a long time Ma had been asking me why I didn't marry some nice young man. "Marry some nice young man," she says. "You'll be happier, Cossy." Why would I be happier, I wondered. What would make me happy? There would be, I supposed, a great deal of this kind of thing. I thought it was honest to talk it over with Luke.

"What for?" I says.

"Because I love you," says Luke serious; "and I want you."

## 22 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I laughed out loud. "Them's funny reasons for a bargain," I says.

He kind of drew off. "Oh, well," he says, "it's all I've got. If you don't think it amounts to anything—"

"That's why you should marry me," I says. "But I want to know why I should marry you."

"Don't you love me?" says Luke.

"I donno," I told him. "I don't like to kiss you so very well."

"Cossy, listen," Luke said. "All that'll come. Honest, it will, dear. Just trust me, and marry me. I need you."

"Well, but, Luke," I says, "I donno if I need you. I don't believe I do."

"You listen here," he says, sort of mad. "You'll have a home of your own—"

"Why, wouldn't I live on your folks's farm?" I says.

"Oh, well, yes," Luke says. "But—I love you, Cossy!" he ends up. "Can't you understand? I love you."

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 23

He said it like the reason. I begun to think it was.

"You've got to marry somebody," says Luke.

I knew that well enough. Home was bad enough now, but when one of the boys brought a wife there it would be worse. I'd have to marry somebody.

"I'd like to get away from home," I says. "Ma and I don't get along, and Pa's like a bear the whole time."

"You'd ought not to say such things, Cossy," says Luke.

"Why not?" I says. "They're true. That is about the only reason I can think of why I should marry you. That, and because I've got to marry somebody."

I thought he'd be mad. Instead, he had his arms around me and was kissing me.

"I don't care what you marry me for," he says. "Marry me, anyhow!"

I thought: "I s'pose I'd get used to him. I don't like the boys, either. I can't bear

## 24 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Henny. Every girl seems to act as if it was all right, after she gets away. Maybe it is."

Two people were coming along the path. Luke and I sat still—it was so dark nobody could notice us where we were. I heard them talking and then I heard Ma's voice. I knew right off Henny had told her about Keddie, and she was going to try to get Mis' Bingy to come home with us.

". . . On my feet from morning till night," she was saying, "till it seems as though I should drop. I don't know how I stand it."

Pa was with her. "Stand it, stand it!" he says. "Anybody'd think you had the pest in the house. I'm sick of hearin' you whine."

"I know," says Ma, "nobody thinks I'm worth anything now. But after I'm dead and gone—"

"Oh, shut up," says Pa. And they went by us.

I stood up, all of a sudden. Anything would be better than home.

"Luke—" I says.

In a few years maybe him and me would be

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 25

talking the same as Ma and Pa. Maybe he'd be hanging around the Dew Drop Inn, same as Keddie Bingy. What of it? All women took the chance.

"Luke," I says, "all right."

"Do you mean you will?" says Luke. I liked him the best I'd ever liked him, the way he says that.

"I said 'all right,' " I says. "You be a good husband to me and I'll be a good wife to you."

Luke kind of scared me, he was so glad.

On the way home he didn't talk much. As soon as we got to our house I made him go. I'd begun to feel the tired way I do every time I'm with him—as if I'd ironed or done up fruit.

Ma and Pa hadn't come back yet. I went up to Ma's and my room and lit the lamp. It was on a bracket, and stuck up behind it was a picture of me when I was a baby. I just stood and stared at it. I hadn't thought of it before—but what if Luke and I should have one?

"No, sir! No, sir! No, sir!" I says, all the while I put myself to bed.

## CHAPTER II

**T**OWARD morning I heard somebody scream. I was dreaming that I was with Luke in the grove, and that he touched my hand, and that it was me that screamed. I heard it again and again, with another noise. Then I woke up. It wasn't me. It was somebody else.

I sat up in bed and shook Ma. She snores, and I couldn't hardly wake her. By the time she sat up I heard Pa move. When we got to the stairs I heard him at the back door.

"What's wanted?" I heard him say.

"Quick, quick! Lemme in! Lemme in!" I heard from outside. I knew it was Mis' Bingy. We got down-stairs just as Pa opened the door, and she come in. Everything about her was blowing—her long hair and her outing night-gown and the baby's shawl. She could hardly breathe, and she leaned against the door and tried to lock it. I went and locked it for her.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 27

She sat down, and the baby was awake and crying, so she jounced it up and down, without knowing she was doing it, while she told what was the matter. She twisted up her hair, and I didn't think she knew she done that, either. She had on a blue calico waist to a work dress, over her nightgown, and her bare feet were in shoes, with the laces dangling. Ma took one look at her, and went and put on the teakettle. She said afterward she never knew she done that, either.

Mis' Bingy told us what happened. She had been laying awake up-stairs when he come home. He called her, and she didn't answer. Then he brought a flatiron and beat at the door. Then he yelled that he'd bring the ax. When he went for it, she slipped out of her bedroom and locked the door, and hid in the closet under the stairs till she heard him run up 'em. Then she started.

"He'll kill me," she says. "He said he'd kill me. I've never known him like this before."

Pa come back from his room, part dressed.

## 28 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I'll go and get the constable," he says.

"Oh," says Mis' Bingy, "don't arrest him! Don't do that!"

"Lookin' for to be killed?" says Pa. "And us, too, for a-harborin' you here?"

She fell to crying then, and the baby cried. Mis' Bingy said things to herself that we couldn't understand. Ma come and brought her a cup of hot water with the tea that was left in the teapot poured in it. Ma had a calico skirt around her shoulders, and she was in her bare feet.

"He'll kill *you*," Ma says to Pa, "on your way to the constable. I wouldn't go past that house for anything, to-night."

I remember how anxious she looked at him. She was anxious, like Mis' Bingy'd been when she said not to arrest Keddie.

Pa muttered, but he didn't go out. In a little while, Ma said best get some rest, so we went up to the room again, and took Mis' Bingy. Her and Ma laid down on the bed, and I got the canvas cot that was folded up in there. My feet stuck out, and I couldn't go



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 29

to sleep. But the funny thing to me' was that both Ma and Mis' Bingy went to sleep in a little while.

I laid there, waiting for it to get light. The window was a little bit gray, and off in the wood-lot I could hear a bird wake up and go to sleep again. I liked it. Early in the morning always seemed to me like some other time. Things acted as if they was something else. Even the bureau looked different. . . . Pretty soon the sky changed, and the dark was thin enough so I could see Ma and Mis' Bingy. Ma's light-colored hair had got all around her face. I thought how young she looked asleep. She looked so little and soft. She looked as if she'd be nice. I guess she would have been if she hadn't had so much to do. I never remembered her when she didn't have too much to do, except once when she broke her arm; and her arm hurt her so that she was cross anyway. Once, when the boys bought her a plaid silk, she was nice for two days; but then wash-day come and spoiled it again, and she couldn't get back.

## 30 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Ma never had much. I don't believe any of us know her like she'd be if she had things to do with, and didn't have to work so hard, and Pa and the boys wasn't all the time picking on her. They all say mean things. I do, too, of course. I always dread our meals. We don't scrap over anything particular, but everything that comes up, somebody's always got some lip to answer back. And Ma's easy teased and always looking for slaps. That's me, too; I'm easy teased, though I don't look for it. Laying there asleep, Ma seemed like somebody I didn't know, and I felt sorry for her. She was having a rotten life.

And Mis' Bingy. The bandage was off her head, and I saw the big red mark. She was awful thin and blue-looking, with cords in her neck. She was young, not more than thirty. Ma was old; Ma was forty, and, awake, she looked it. I could see Mis' Bingy's bare arm, and it was strong as an ox. It laid around the baby, that was sleeping on her chest. I liked to look at it. But I thought about her life, too, and I wondered how either Ma or her

kept going at all. And what made them willing to. Neither of 'em was having a real life. Look what love had brought them to. . . .

*And there was me, starting in the same way, with Luke.*

It was broad daylight by then, so I could see around the room. There wasn't a carpet, and the plaster was cracked. So was the pitcher, that was just for show, anyhow, because we washed in the kitchen. I'd tried to fill it for a while, but Ma said it was putting on. In a little bit we would all be sprucing up in the kitchen, with Ma trying to get breakfast and everybody yipping out at everybody else.

*And I'd just fixed it so's that all my life would be the same thing as their lives.*

I slipped out of bed and began to dress. It wasn't Sunday, but I opened the drawer where my underclothes were, and took out them that had lace edging. I put on my best shoes and my white stockings. Then I went out in the hall closet and got down my new muslin that I'd worn only once that summer, and I took it over my arm and went down in the kitchen.

## 32 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

When I was all ready I went through the door that opened stillest, and outdoors.

Out there was as different as if it didn't belong. You thought of the fresh smell of it before you thought of anything else. Nothing about it had been used. And the thin sunshine come right at you, slanting. Over the porch the morning-glories were all out. I pulled off a whole great vine of 'em and put it around my neck. Then I ran. I wasn't going to go anywheres or do anything. But I was clean and dressed up, and outdoors was just as good as anybody else has.

I went down the road toward the sun. It seemed as if I must be going toward something else, better than all I knew. I felt as if I was a person, living like persons live. I wondered why I hadn't done this every morning. I wondered why everybody didn't do it. I kind of wanted to be doing it together with somebody. Everybody I knew done things so separate. I wisht everybody was with me.

I wanted to sing. So I did—the first thing that come into my head. I put my head back,

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 33

so's I could see the two rows of the trees ahead, almost meeting, and the thick blue between them. And then I sung the first thing that come into my head, and I sung it to the top of my voice :

“O Mother dear, Jerusalem,  
When shall I come to Thee?  
When shall my sorrows have an end?  
Thy joys when shall I see?  
O happy harbor of God's saints!  
O sweet and pleasant soil!  
In thee no sorrow can be found,  
Nor grief nor care nor toil.”

And when I got to the end of the verse somebody said :

“I don't believe you can possibly mind if I thank you for that?”

The man must have been sitting by the road, because he was right there beside me, standing still, with his hat in his hand.

I says, “I can't sing. I just done that for fun.”

“That's what was so delightful,” he says. And then he says, “Are you going to the village? May I walk along with you?”

## 34 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"No, I ain't going to town," I says. "I ain't going anywheres much. But you can walk where you want to. The road's free."

He walked side of me. I looked at him. He was good-looking. He was so clean—that was the first thing I noticed about him. Clean, and sort of brown and pink, with nothing more on his face than was on mine, and yet he looked manly. He was big. He had a wide way with his shoulders, and he held his head nice. I liked to look at him, so I did look.

And all at once I says to myself, What did I care so I got some fun out of it. Other girls was always doing this. Lena Curtsy would have talked with him in a minute. Maybe I could get him to ask me to go to a show. I couldn't go, but I thought I'd like to make him ask me.

"Was you lonesome?" I ask', looking at him.

He didn't say anything. He just looked at me, smiling a little. I thought I'd better say a little more. I wanted him to know I wasn't a stick, but that I was in for fun, like a city girl.

"You don't look like a chap that'd be lone-

some very long," I says. "Not if you can get acquainted *this* easy."

He kept looking at me, and smiling a little.

"Tell me," he says, "do you live about here?"

"Me? Right here. I'm the original Maud Muller," I says.

"And what do you do besides rake hay?" he says.

I couldn't think what else Maud Muller done. I hadn't read it since Fifth Reader. So I says:

"Well, she don't often get a chance to talk with traveling gentlemen."

"That's good," he says, "but—I wouldn't have thought it."

I see he meant because I done it so easy and ready, so I give him as good as he sent.

"Wouldn't *you?*" I says. "Well, I s'pose you get a chance to flirt with strange girls every town you strike."

He looked at me again, not smiling now, but just awfully interested. I see I was interesting him down to the ground. Lena Curtsy couldn't have done it better.

## 36 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"Flirt," he says over. "What do you mean by 'flirt'?"

I laughed at him. "You're a pretty one to ask that," I says, "with them eyes."

"Oh," he says serious, "then you like my eyes?"

"I never said so," I gave him. "Do you like mine?"

"Let me look at them," he said.

We stopped in the road, and I looked him square in the eye. I can look anybody in the eye. I looked at him straight, till he laughed and moved on. He seemed to be thinking about something.

"I think I like you best when you sing," he said. "Won't you sing something else?"

"Sure," I says, and wheeled around in the road, and kind of skipped backward. And I sung:

"Oh, oh, oh, oh! Pull down the blinds!  
When they hear the organ play-ing  
They won't know what we are say-ing.  
Pull down the blinds!"

I'd heard it to the motion-picture show the



week before. I was thankful he could see I was up on the nice late tunes.

"I wonder," says the man, "if you can tell me something. I wonder if you can tell me what made you pick out this song to sing to me, and what made you sing that other song when you were alone?"

All at once the morning come back. Ever since I met him I'd forgot the morning and the sun, and the way I'd felt when I started out alone. I'd just been thinking about myself, and about how I could make him think I was cute and up-to-date. Now it was just as if the country road opened up again, and there I was on it, opposite the Dew Drop Inn, just being me. I looked up at him.

"Honest," I says, "I don't know. I guess it was because I wanted you to think I was fun."

He looked at me for a minute, straight and deep.

"By Jove!" he says, and I didn't know what ailed him. "Have you had breakfast?" he ask', short.

## 38 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"No," I says.

"You come in here with me and get some," he says, like an order.

He led the way into the yard of the Dew Drop Inn. There's a grape arbor there, and some bare hard dirt, and two or three tables. Nobody was there, only the boy, sweeping the dirt with a broom. We sat down at the table in the arbor. It was pleasant to be there. A house wren was singing his head off somewhere near. A woman come out and sloshed water on the stone at the back door and begun scrubbing. A clock in the bar struck six.

Joe Burkey, that keeps the Inn, come out and nodded to me.

"Joe," I says, "did Keddie Bingy come back here?"

Joe wiped his hands on the cloth on his arm, and then brushed his mustache with it, and then wiped off the table with it.

"I don't know nothin' about K. Bingy," says Joe. "I t'run him out o' my place last night, neck *and* crop, for bein' drunk and disorderly. I ain't seen him since.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 39

I looked up at Joe's little eyes. They looked like the eyes of the wolf in the picture in our dining-room. Joe's got a fat chin, and a fat smile, but his eyes don't match them.

"You coward and you brute," I says to him, "where did Keddie Bingy *get* drunk and disorderly?"

Joe begun to sputter and to step around in new places. The man I was with brought his hand down on the table.

"Never mind that," he says, "what you've to do is bring some breakfast. What will you have for your breakfast, mademoiselle?" he says to me.

"Why," I says, "some salt pork and some baking powder biscuit for me, and some fried potatoes and a piece of some kind of pie. What kind have you got?"

"Apple and raisin," says Joe, sulky. But the man I was with he says:

"Suppose you let me order our breakfast. Will you?"

"Suit yourself, I'm sure," says I. "I ain't used to the best."

## 40 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

The man thought a minute.

"Back there a little way," he says, "I crossed something that looked like a trout stream. Is it a trout stream?"

"Sure," says Joe and I together.

"How long," says the man, "would it take that boy there to bring in a small catch?"

"My!" I says, "he can do that quicker'n a cat can lick his eye. Can't he, Joe?"

"Very well," says the man. "We will have brook trout for breakfast. Make a lemon butter for them, please, and use good butter. With that bring us some toast, very thin, very brown and very hot, with more good butter. Have you some orange marmalade?"

"Sure," says Joe, "but it costs thirty cents a jar; I open the whole—"

"Some orange marmalade," says the man. "And coffee—I wonder what that good woman there would say to letting me make the coffee?"

"Her? She'll do whatever I tell her," says Joe. "But we charge extra when guests got to make their own coffee."

"And now," says the man, getting through

with that, "what can you bring us while we wait? Some peaches?"

"The orchard," says Joe, "is rotten wid peaches."

"Good," says the man. "Now we understand each other. If mademoiselle will excuse me, we will set the coffee on its way."

I set and waited, thinking how funny it was for a man to make the coffee. All Pa ever done in his life to help about the cooking was to clean the fish.

I went and played with a kitten, so's not to have to talk to Joe. I didn't know what I might say to him. When I come back the table was laid with a nice clean cloth and napkins that were ironed good and dishes with little flowers on. When the woman come out to the well, I ask' her if I could pick some phlox for the table. She laughed and said yes, if I wanted to. So I got some, all pink. I was just bringing it when the man come back.

"Stand there, just for a minute," he says.

I done like he told me, by the door of the arbor. I thought he was going to say some-

## 42 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

thing nice, and I hoped I'd think of something smart and sassy to say back to him. But all he says was just:

"Thank you. Now, come and sit down, please."

We fixed the flowers. Then Joe brought a basket of beautiful peaches, and we took what we wanted. The man took one, and sat touching it with the tips of his fingers, and he looked over at me with a nice smile.

"And now, my child," he says, "tell me your name."

I always hate to tell folks my name. In the village they've always made fun of it.

"What do you want to bother with that for?" I says. "Ain't I good enough without a tag?"

He spoke almost sharp. "I want you to tell me your name," he says.

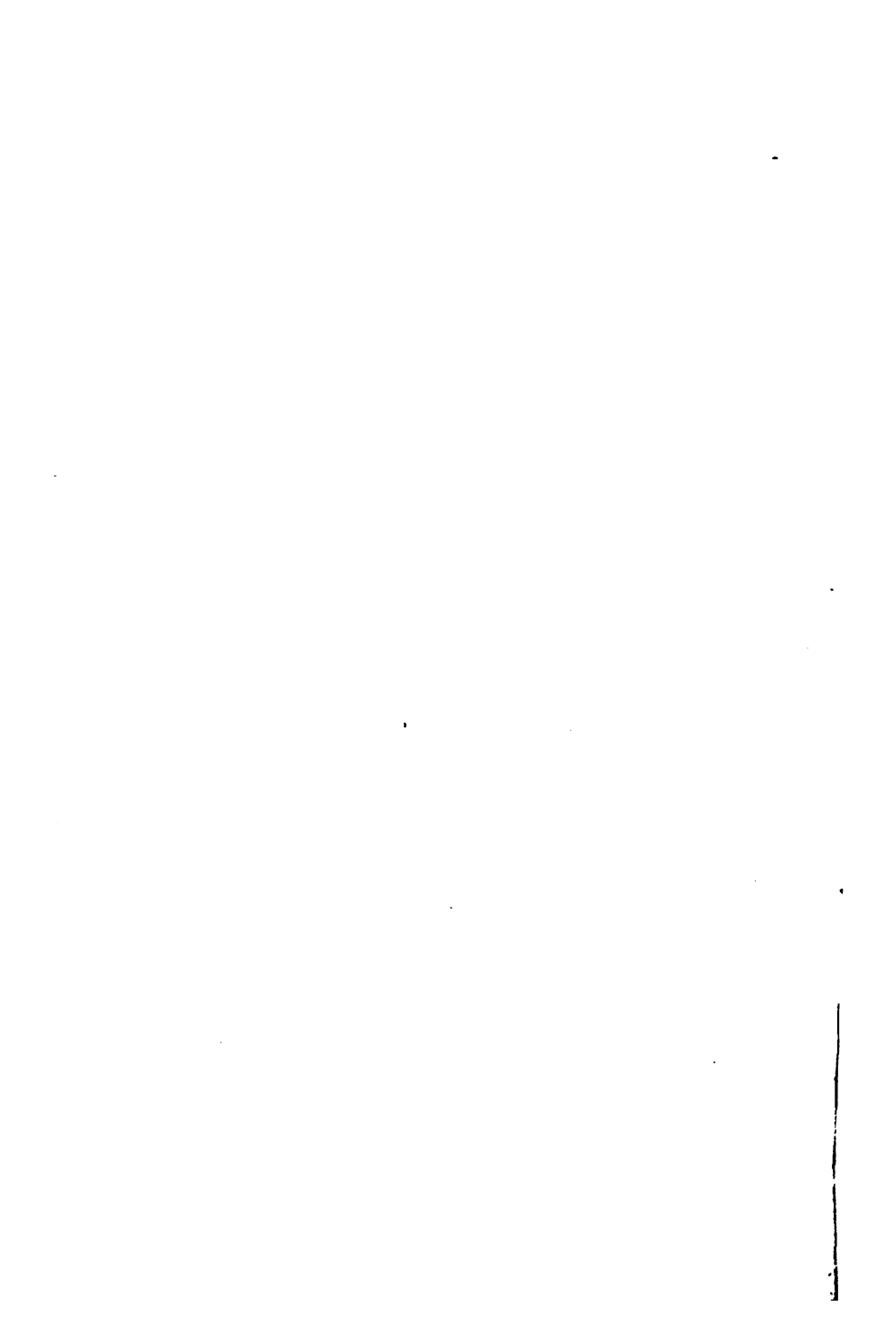
So I told him. "Cosma Wakely," I says.

He looked funny. "Really?" he says. "*Cosma?*"

"But everybody calls me 'Cossy,'" I says



"I want you to tell me your name," he said





quick. "I know what a funny name it is. My grandmother named me. She was queer."

"*Cossy!*" he says over. "Why, Cosma is perfect."

"You're kiddin' me," I says. "Don't you think I don't know it."

He didn't say he wasn't.

"Ain't you going to tell me your name?" I says. "Not that I s'pose you'll tell me the right one. They never do."

"My name," he says, "is John Ember."

"On the square?" I asked him.

"Yes," he says. He was a funny man. He didn't have a bit of come-back. He took you just plain. He reminded me of the way I acted with Luke. But usually I could jolly like the dickens.

"You travel, I guess," I says. "What do you travel for?"

He laughed. "If I understand you," he said, "you are asking me what my line is?"

I nodded. I'd just put the pit in my mouth, so I couldn't guess something sassy, like pickles.

## 44 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I have no line," he says. "It's an area."

"Huh?" I says—on account of the pit.

"I travel," says he, "for the human race. But they don't know it."

"Sure," I says, when I had it swallowed, "you got to sell to everybody, I know that. But what do you sell 'em?"

He shook his head.

"I don't sell it," he says. "They won't buy it. I shall always be a philanthropist. The commodity," says he, "is books."

"Oh!" I says. "A book agent! I'd have taken you for a regular salesman."

"I tell you I *don't* sell 'em," he says. "Nobody will buy. I just write 'em."

I put down my other peach and looked at him.

"An author?" I says. "You?"

"Thank you," says he, "for believing me. Nobody else will. Now don't let's talk about that. Do you mind telling me something about yourself?"

"Oh," I says, "I've got a book all made out of wrapping paper. It ain't wrote yet, it's in

the bottom drawer. But I'm going to write one."

"Good!" he says. "Tell me about that, too."

I don't know what made me, except the surprise of finding that he was what he was, instead of a traveling man. But the first thing I knew I was telling him about me; how I'd stopped school when I was fourteen, and had worked out for a little while in town; and then when the boys got the job in the blast furnace, I came home to help Ma. I told him how the only place I'd ever been, besides the village, was to the city, twict. Only two things I didn't tell him at first—about what home was like, and about Luke. But he got them both out of me. Because I wound up what I was telling him with something I thought was the thing to say. Lena Curtsy always said it.

"I've just been living at home for four years now," I said. "I s'pose it's the place for a girl."

I remember how calm and slow he was when he answered.

"Why no," he says. "Your home is about

## 46 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

the last place in the world a girl of your age ought to be."

"What do you know about my home?" I asked him quick.

"I don't mean your home," he says. "I mean any home, if it's your parents' home. If you can't be in school, why aren't you out by this time doing some useful work of your own?"

"Work," I says. "I do work. I work like a dog."

"I don't mean doing your family's work," he said. "I mean doing your own work. Of course you're not going to tell me you're happy?"

"No," I says, "I ain't happy. I hate my work. I hate the kind of a home I live in. It's Bedlam, the whole time. I'm going to get married to get out of it."

"So you are going to be married," he says. "What's the man like—do you mind telling me that?"

I told him about Luke, just the way he is. While I talked he was eating his peaches. I'd

been through with mine quite a while now, so I noticed him eat his. He done it kind of with the tips of his fingers. I liked to watch him. He sort of broke the peach. The juice didn't run down. I remembered how I must have et mine, and I felt ashamed.

Before I was all through about Luke, Joe come in with the trout, and some thin, crispy potatoes on the platter, and the toast and the marmalade; and Mr. Ember went to see about the coffee. He brought it out himself, and poured it himself—and it smelled like something I'd never smelled before. And now, when he begun to eat, I watched him. I broke my toast, like he done. I used my fork on the trout, like him, and I noticed he took his spoon out of his cup, and I done that, too, though I'd got so I could drink from a cup without a handle and hold the spoon with my finger, like the boys done. I kept tasting the coffee, too, instead of drinking it off at once, even when it was hot, like I'd learned the trick of. I didn't know but his way just happened to be his way, but I wanted to make sure. Anyway,

48 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I never smack my lips, and Luke and the boys do that.

"Now," he said, "while we enjoy this very excellent breakfast, will you do me the honor to let me tell you a little something about me?"

I don't see what honor that would be, and I said so. And then he told me things.

I'm sorry that I can't put them down. It was wonderful. It was just like a story the teacher tells you when you're little and not too old for stories. It turned out he'd been to Europe and to Asia. He'd done things that I never knew there was such things. But he didn't talk about him, he just talked about the things and the places. I forgot to eat. It seemed so funny that I, Cossy Wakely, should be listening to somebody that had done them things. He said something about a volcano.

"A volcano!" I says. "Do they have them *now*? I thought that was only when the geography was."

"But the geography *is*, you know," he says. "It is now."

"Did that big flat book all mean now?" I

says. "I thought it meant long ago. I had a picture of the Ark and the flood and the Temple, and when the stars fell—"

"Oh, the fools!" he says to himself; but I didn't know who he meant, and I was pretty sure he must mean me.

All the while we were having breakfast, he talked with me. When it was over, and he'd paid the bill—I tried my best to see how much it was, so as to tell Lena Curtsy, but I couldn't—he turned around to me and he says:

"The grass is not wet this morning. It's high summer. Will you walk with me up to the top of that hill over there in the field? I want to show you the whole world."

"Sure," I says. "But you can't see much past Twiney's pasture from that little runt of a hill."

We climbed the fence. He put his hand on a post and vaulted the wire as good as the boys could have done. When he turned to help me, I was just doing the same thing. Then it come over me that maybe an author wouldn't think that was ladylike.

## 50 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I always do them that way," I says, kind of to explain.

"Is there any other way?" says he.

"No!" says I, and we both laughed. It was nice to laugh with him, and it was the first time we'd done it together.

The field was soft and shiny. There was pretty cobwebs. Everything looked new and glossy.

"Great guns!" I says. "Ain't it nice out here?"

"That's exactly what I've been thinking," says he.

We went along still for a little ways. It come to me that maybe, if I could only say some of the things that moved around on the outside of my head, he might like them. But I couldn't get them together enough.

"It makes you want to think nice thoughts," I says, by and by.

"Doesn't it?" he says, with his quick, straight look. "And when it does, then you do."

"I don't know enough," I says. "I wisht I did."



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 51

I'll never, never forget when we come to the top of the little hill. He stood there with nothing but the sky, blue as fury, behind him.

"Now look," he says. "There's New York, over there."

"You can't see New York from here!" I says. "Not with no specs that was ever invented."

He went right on. "Down there," he says, "are St. Louis and Cincinnati and New Orleans. Across there is Chicago. And away on there are two days of desert—two days, by express train!—and then mountains and a green coast, and San Francisco and the Pacific. And then all the things we talked about this morning: Japan and India and the Alps and London and Rome and the Nile."

I wondered what on earth he was driving at.

"Which do you want to do," says he, "go there, and try to find these places? You won't find them, you know. But at least, you'll know they're in the world. Or live down there in a little farm-house like that one and slave for Luke?"

## 52 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"But I can't even try to find them places," I says. "How could I?"

"Maybe not," he says. "Maybe not. I don't say you could. All I mean is this, Why not think of your life as if you have really been born, and not as if you were waiting to be born?"

"Oh," I says, "don't you s'pose I've thought of that? But I can't get away."

"Yes, you can," he says, looking at me, earnest. "Yes, you can. If you just say the word."

I was as tall as he was, and I looked right at him, with all the strength I had.

"Do you think," I says, "that because I'm from the country I ain't on to all such talk as that? Do you think I don't know what them kind of hold-outs means? We ain't such fools as you think we are, not since Hattie Duffy thought she was going to Paris, and ended in the bottom of a pond. They's only one way any of us ever gets to see any of them things, and don't you think we're fooled unless we want to be. No, sir. We ain't that fresh."

He scared me the way he whirled round at me.

"You miserable little creature!" he said.

"What are you talking about?"

"Well," I says, "don't you ever think I—"

Then he done a funny thing. He drew a deep breath, and took his hat off and looked up at the sky and off over the fields.

"After all," he said, "thank God this is the way you are beginning to take it! When a country girl can protect herself like that, it is growing safe for her to be born. Listen to me, child," he says.

He had me puzzled for fair by then. I just listened.

"Just now," he says, "I called you a miserable little creature. That was because you quite naturally mistook me for one of the wretched hunters whom women have been trying to evade since the beginning. Well, I was wrong to call you that. Instead, I applaud your magnificent ability to take care of yourself. I applaud even more in the incident—but I won't bother you with that."

## 54 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I kept trying to see what he meant.

"Now you must," he said, "try to understand me. What I meant to say to you was that with the whole world to choose from, you are, in my opinion, quite wrong to settle down here to your farm and your Luke and the drudgery you say you loathe, without ever giving yourself a chance to choose at all. Perhaps you would come back and settle here because you wanted to. . . . I hope you would do that, under somewhat different conditions. But don't settle here because you're trapped and can't get out."

"But I can't get out—" I was beginning, but he went on:

"I know perfectly well that a great part of the world would think that I ought not to be talking to you like that. They would say that you are 'safe' here. That you and Luke would have a quiet, contented life. But I care nothing at all for such safety. I think that unreasonable contentment leads to various kinds of damnation. If you were an ordinary girl I should not be talking to you like this. I

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 55

should not have the courage—yet; not while life treats women as it treats them now. But in spite of your vulgarity, you are a remarkable woman.”

“In spite of *what?*” I says.

“I mean it,” he says, “and you must let me tell you, because you seem to be, in all but one thing, a fine straightforward creature. But in the way you treat men, you *are* vulgar, you know. Not hopelessly, just deplorably. Now tell me the truth. Why did you pretend to flirt with me? For that isn’t your natural manner. You put it on. Why did you do that?”

I could tell him that well enough.

“Why,” I says, “I guess it was the same as the singing. I wanted you to know I wasn’t a stick. I wanted you to think I was lively and fun. It’s the way the girls do. I can’t do it as good as they do, I know that.”

“Promise me,” he says, “that if ever you do get out, you’ll be the fine and straightforward one—not the other one.”

“I shan’t get out,” I says. “I can’t get out.”

## 56 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"'I can't get out,' " he says over. "'I can't get out.' It's a great mistake. If you feel it in you to get out, then you'll get out. That's the answer."

"I do," I says. "I always have. I wake up in the mornings . . ."

I'll never know what it was that come over me. But all of a sudden, the me that laid awake nights and thought, and the me that had come out in the sun that morning was the only me I had, and it could talk.

"Oh," I says, "don't you think I'm the way I seemed back there on the road. I'm different; but I'm the only one that knows that. I like nice things. I'd like to act nice. I'd like to be the way I could be. But there ain't enough of me to be that way. And I don't know what to do."

He took both my hands.

"And I don't know what you're to do," he said. "That is the part you must find for yourself. It's like dying—yet a while, till they get us going."

We stood still for a minute. And then I

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 57

saw what I hadn't seen before—what a grand face he had. He wasn't like the handsome men on calendars or on cigar boxes, or on the signs. He was like somebody else I hadn't ever seen before. His face wasn't young at all, but it looked glad, and that made it seem young.

"I wish you wouldn't ever go way," I says.

"I ought to be miles from here at this moment," he says. "Now see here . . . I want to give you these."

He took two cards out of his pocket, and wrote on them.

"This one is mine," he says. "If you do come to the city, you are surely to let me know that you are there. And if you take this other card to this address here, this gentleman may be able to give you work. Now good-by. I'm going to cut through the meadow, and I suppose you'll be going back."

He put out his hand.

"Don't go," I says. "Don't go. I shan't ever find anybody to talk to again."

"That's part of your job, you know," he

58 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

says. "Remember you *have* a job. Good-by, child."

He went off down the slope. At the foot of it he stopped.

"Cosma!" he shouts, "don't ever let them call you anything else, you know!"

"I won't," I says. "Honest, I won't, Mr. Ember."

I watched him just as far as I could see him. On the road he turned and waved his hand. When he was out of sight I started to go back home. But when I see things again, I'll never forget the lonesomeness. Things was like a sucked-out sack. I laid down in the grass—I haven't cried since the last time Pa whipped me, six years ago, but I thought I was going to cry now. Then I happened to think that was the way I'd have done before I met him; but it wasn't the way I must do now. Instead, I got up on to my feet and I started for home on the run. It was like something was starting somewheres, and I *had* to hurry.



## CHAPTER III

MOTHER was scrubbing the well-house. "Cossy Wakely," she says, "where you been?"

"Walking," I says.

"Walking!" says she; "with all I got to do. I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself. My land, what you got on your best clothes for?"

"Mother," I says, "you call me 'Cosma' after this, will you?"

She stared at me. "Such airs," she says. "And callin' me 'Mother.' Who you been with? What you rigged out like that for?"

"I didn't dress up for anybody," I says, "only because I wanted to."

"Such a young one as you've turned out," says she. "What's to become of you I don't know. Wait till your Pa comes in—I'll tell him."

"Mother," I says, "I'm twenty years old."

## 60 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

You call me 'Cosma,' and let me call you 'Mother.' And don't feel you have to scold me all the time."

"I'll quit scolding you fast enough," she says, "when you quit deserving it. Go and get out of them togs, the dishes are waiting for you."

I went in the house. Mis'. Binky was not there, up-stairs or down. I went back to the door and asked about her.

"Why, she's gone home," says Mother. "You didn't s'pose she was going to live here, did you?"

"Home?" I says. "Where that man is?"

"We can't all pick out our homes," she says, scrubbing the boards.

Pa heard her. He was just coming in from the barn with the swill buckets to fill.

"That's you," he says, "finding fault with the hands that feeds you. Where'd you be, I'd like to know, if it wasn't for this home and me? In the poorhouse."

Mother straightened up on her knees by the well.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 61

"Mean to say I don't pay my keep?" she says.

For a minute she seemed young and somebody, like when she was asleep.

"Not when you dish up such pickings as you done this morning," says Pa.

She screamed out something at him, and I ran across the yard toward Mis' Bingy's. They were going on so hard they forgot about me.

The grove was still. I wished *he* could have seen it. As soon as I got in it, I forgot about home, and the time before come back on me, like some of me singing. That was it—some of me singing. But I see right off the grove was different. It was almost as if he *had* been in it, and had showed me things about it. I begun looking out at it the way I thought he'd be looking at it. There seemed to be more of the grove than I thought there was. Then I thought how he'd never be there in it, and how I'd prob'ly never see him again, and something in me hurt, and I didn't want to go on. What was the use? . . . What was the use? . . . What was the use? . . .

## 62 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Mis' Bingy's house lay all still in the sun. The sunflowers and hollyhocks by the back door and the chickens picking around looked all peaceful and like home. I thought Mr. Bingy must be sleeping off his drunk, and her keeping quiet not to disturb him.

The kitchen door was standing open and I stepped up on the porch. And then I heard a terrible cry, from right there in the room.

"Go back—back, Cossy!" Mis' Bingy said. "He'll kill you!"

All in an instant I took it in. She was sitting crouched on the bed, shielding the baby with a pillow. And he set close beside the door, sharpening his hatchet.

He jumped up when he see me. I remember his red eyes and his teeth, and his thin whiskers that showed his chin through. Then he sprang forward, right toward me and on to me, with his hatchet in his hand.

I donno how I done it. For no reason, I guess, only that I'm big and strong and he was little and pindling. I know I never stopped to think or decide nothing. I dodged his

hatchet and I jumped at him. I threw my whole strength at him, with my hands on his face and his throat. He went down like a log, because I was so much bigger and so strong. But that wouldn't have saved us, only that, as he fell, he hit his head on the sharp corner of the cook stove. He rolled over on his back, and the hatchet flew out on the zinc.

"You killed him!" Mis' Bingy says. She sat up, but she didn't go to him.

"We ain't no time to think of that," I says. "Get your things and come."

She didn't ask anything. She took the baby and run right and got a bundle of things she'd got ready. I see then that she had on her best black dress, and the baby was all dressed clean and embroidered. I picked up the hatchet, and we went out the door, and shut it behind us. She never looked back, even when we got to the door; and I noticed that, because it wasn't like Mis' Bingy, that's soft and frightened.

"I don't mind what he done to me," she said, "but just now he took the baby—and touched her hand—to the hot griddle."

64 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

She showed me.

"I hope he's dead," I said.

"Where shall I go?" she says. "My God, where shall I go?"

"Ain't you no folks?" I asked her.

"Not near enough so's I've got the fare," she says. "Anyhow, I don't want to come on to them."

We was in the grove at the time. I donno as it would have come to me so quick if we hadn't been there.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "let's us go to the city together, you and me. And find a job."

I thought she'd draw back. But she just stopped still in the path and looked at me round the baby's head.

"You couldn't do that, could you?" she says.

"Yes," I says. "I didn't know it before, but I know it now. I could do that."

She kep' on looking at me, with something coming in her face.

"You couldn't go to-day, could you?" she says.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 65

I hadn't thought of to-day, but the thing was on me then.

"Why not to-day as good as any day?" I says.

"Your Ma—" she says.

"This is different," I says. "This is for me to do."

We come to the edge of the grove, and across the open lot I could see Mother. She was spreading out her scrubbing cloth on the grass to dry. I went up to her, and I wasn't scared nor I didn't dread anything because I was so sure.

"Mother," I says, "Mis' Bingy and I are going up to the city together to get some work. And we're goin' to-day. But first I've got to go and find somebody. I donno but I've killed Mr. Bingy."

I don't remember all the things she said. All of a sudden, my head was full of other things that stood out sharp, and I couldn't take in what was going on all around, not with what I had to think about. Mis' Bingy sat down by

## 66 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

the well-house and went to nursing the baby, and Mother stood up before her asking her things. I left 'em so, and ran down the road to the Inn. That was the nearest place I could get anybody.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning by that time. All this had happened to me before it was time to get the potatoes ready for dinner. I remember thinking that as I run. 'There was the Inn—and Joe was out wiping off the tables in the yard, with the same dirty cloth, and straightening up the chairs.

"Joe," I says, "I ain't sure, but I think I've hurt Mr. Bingy pretty bad. Is there somebody can go up to their house and see?"

Joe stared, his thick, red, open lips and his red tongue looking more surprised than his little wolf eyes.

"What?" he says.

When I'd made him know, he got two men from the field and they run up the road toward Bingy's. On the Inn window-sill was the same kitten I'd played with while I was waiting for the coffee. I went and got it and



sat down at the table where we'd been. It seemed a day since I was there. I seemed like somebody else. For the first time I wondered what would be if Keddie Bingy was dead. But it wasn't the being arrested or stood up in the court room or locked in jail that I thought of, and it wasn't Keddie at all. All I kept thinking was:

"If Keddie's dead, I won't never see *him* again."

I sat there going over that, and holding the kitten. It was a nice little kitten that looked up in my face more helpless than anything but a baby, or a bird, or a puppy. I felt kind of like some such helpless things. The world wasn't like what I thought it was. More things happened to you than I ever knew could happen. I always thought they happened just to other folks. The tables and the bare, swept dirt didn't look as if anything was happening anywheres near them, and yet down the road maybe was a dead man that I'd killed. And a mile and more away by now *he* was, and a little bit ago he'd been here, and the me that set

## 68 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

there with him had been somebody else. And the me that had been awake before daybreak that morning probably wouldn't ever be me at all, any more. Everything was different forever. I saw something on the ground, down by the arbor. It was the pink phlox I had picked. They threw it away when they wanted to wash the glass. It seemed so helpless, laying there without any water. I went and got it and put it on my dress.

Pretty soon I heard them coming back, talking. Joe and one of the men come in sight, and Joe sung out:

"It's all right. He's groaning. Ben's gone for a doctor. What happened?"

I told 'em; but I wanted to get away.

"Well, shave my bones," Joe says, "if you ain't the worst I ever see. Why didn't you leave the woman knock down her own man?"

"Why didn't you leave her get him drunk?" I says. "If I'd have killed him, it'd been you that murdered him, Joe."

"Now, look here," says Joe, "I'm a-carrying on an honest business. If a man goes for

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 69

to make a fool of himself, is that my lookout, or ain't it? Who do you think lets me keep this business, anyway? It's the U. S. Gover'ment, that's who it is. You better be careful what you sling at this business."

"Then it's the Gover'ment that's a big fool, instead of you and Keddie," I says, and started for home. I remember Joe shouted out something; but all I was thinking was that the day before I'd of thought it was wicked to say what I'd just said, and now I didn't; and I wondered why.

There wasn't a minute to lose now, because if Keddie was groaning he'd be up and out again and looking for both of us. Mother and Mis' Bingy and the baby was still out in the yard by the well-house, and Father was just starting down the road after me.

It's funny, but what, just the day before, would have been a thing so big I wouldn't have thought of doing it, chiefly on account of the row it'd make, was now just easy and natural. They must have said things, I remember how loud their voices were and how I wished they

## 70. A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

wouldn't. And I remember them saying over and over the same thing:

"You don't need to go. You don't *need* to go. Ain't you always had a roof over you and enough to eat? A girl had ought to be thankful for a good home."

But I went and got my things ready and got myself dressed. I wanted to tell them about the feeling I had that I *had* to go, but I couldn't tell about that, now that I was going, any more than I could tell when I thought I mustn't go.

I did say something to Mother when she come and stood in the bedroom door and told me I was an ungrateful girl.

"Ungrateful for what?" I says.

"For me bringing you up and working my head off for you," she says, "and your Pa the same."

"But, Mother," I says, "that was your job to do. And me—I ain't found my job—yet."

"Your job is to do as we tell you to," says Mother. "The idea!"

I tried, just that once, to make her see.

"Mother," I says, "I'm separate. I'm some-

body else. I'm old enough to get a-hold of some life like you've had, and some work I want to do. And I can't do it if I stay here. I'm *separate*—don't you see that?"

Then it come over me, dim, how surprised she must feel, after all, to have to think that, that I was separate, instead of her and hers. I went over toward her—I wanted to tell her so. But she says:

"I don't know what you're coming to. And I'm glad I don't. When I'm dead and gone, you'll think of this."

And then I couldn't say what I'd tried to say. But I thought what she said was true, that I would think about it some day, and be sorry. If it hadn't been for Mis' Bingy, I s'pose I'd have given it up, even then. It's hard to make a thing that's been so for a long time stop being so. But Mis' Bingy needed me, and I was sorry for her; and I liked the feeling.

On the stairs Mother thought of something else.

"What about Luke?" she says.

## 72 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I hadn't thought of Luke.

"He'd ought to be the one to set his foot down," says Mother, "seeing we can't do anything with you."

Set his foot down—Luke! Why? Because he'd tell me he loved me and I said I'd marry him! I went to the pail for a drink of water, and I stood there and laughed. Luke setting his foot down on me because I said he might!

"She'll come back when she's hungry," says Father. "Don't carry on so, Mate."

Mate was Mother's name. I hadn't heard Father call her that many times. It come to me that my going away was something that brought them nearer together for a minute. And *Mate*! It meant something, something that she was. She *was* Father's mate. They'd met once for the first time. They'd wanted their life to be nice. I ran up to them and kissed them both. And then for the first time in my life I saw Mother's lip tremble.

"I'll do up your clean underclothes," she says, "and send 'em after you. You tell me where."

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 73

"Mother, Mother!" I says, and took hold of her. If it hadn't been for Mis' Bingy I'd have given up going then and there, and married Luke whenever he said so.

It was Mis' Bingy's scared face that give me courage to go, and it was her face that kept my mind off myself all the way to the depot. I thought she was going to faint away when we went by the lane that led up to their house. But we never heard anything or saw anybody. We were going to the depot, and just set there until the first train come along for the city. And all the while we did set there, Mis' Bingy got paler and paler every time the door opened, or somebody shouted out on the platform. She wanted to take the first train that come in and get away anywheres, even if it took us out of our way. But I got her to wait the half hour till the city train come along; and as the time went by she begun to be less willing to go at all.

"Cossy," she says, when we heard the engine whistle, "I've been wrong. I'm being a bad wife. I'm going back."

## 74 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"What kind of a wife you're being," I says, "that's got nothing to do with it. It's *her*."

She looked down at the baby. The baby had on her little best cloak, and a bonnet that the ruffle come down over her eyes. She wasn't a pretty baby, her face was spotted and she made a crooked mouth when she cried. But she was soft and helpless, and I didn't mind her being homely.

"I'm taking her away from a father's care," says Mis' Bingy, beginning to cry.

It seemed to me wicked the way she was stuffed full of words that didn't mean anything, like "bad wife" and "father's care." I didn't say anything, though. The baby's hand lay spread out on her cloak, with the burned part done up in a rag and some soda, the way Mother'd fixed it. I just picked up the little hand, and looked up at Mis' Bingy.

When the train come in, she went out and got on to it, without another word.



## CHAPTER IV

IT was past one o'clock when we got to the city, and we hadn't had anything to eat. We found a lunch place near the depot, and then I spent a penny for a paper, and we set there in the restaurant and tried to find where to go. It wasn't much of any fun, getting to the city, not the way you'd think it would be, because Mis' Bingy and I didn't know where we were going.

The Furnished Room page all sounded pleasant, but when we asked the restaurant keeper where the cheap ones were, most of them was quite far to walk. Finally we picked out some near each other and started out to find them. I carried my valise and Mis' Bingy's, and she had the baby. It was a hot day, with a feel of thunder in the air.

We walked for two hours, because neither of us thought we'd ought to begin by spending

## 76 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

car-fare. Mis' Bingy had sixteen dollars that she'd saved, off and on, for two years. I had five dollars. So neither of us was worried very much about money; but we wanted to save all we could. We went to five or six places that were nice, but they cost too much; and to two that we could have taken, only the lady said she didn't want a baby in the house.

"If they're born in your house, do you turn 'em out?" I says to one of 'em.

Pretty soon we found a little grassy place with trees, and big buildings around it, and we went in that and sat down on the grass.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "was you ever in the city before?"

"Sure I was," she says, proud, "twelve years ago. We come to his uncle's funeral. But he didn't leave him anything."

"I was here once," I says, "when I was 'leven. To have my eyes done to. And once when I was eighteen, when Mother got her teeth. Did you ever go to the theater here?" I ask' her.

"No," says she.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 77

"Did you ever see in a jewelry store here?"

"No," says she.

"Or in stores with low-neck dresses and light colors?"

"No," says she.

"Nor the Zoo with the animals, nor a store where they sell just flowers, nor the band?" I says.

"No," says she. "But he used to tell me, when he come up sometimes," she tacks on.

The sun kept coming out and going under. The trees moved pleasant and folks went hurrying by. It kind of come over me:

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "you ain't ever had anything in your whole life, and neither have I. And now it's the city!"

But she put her head down on the baby and begun to cry.

"I don't know what's going to become of us," she says. "It's awful."

I jumped up and stood on the grass and looked off down the street toward the city.

"And I don't know what's going to become of us!" I says. "Ain't it grand?"

## 78 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I laughed, and whirled on my toe. A woman was going along the walk that cut through the grassy place where we was. She looked nice, like pictures of women.

"Excuse me," I says to her, "can you tell us somebody that has a room to rent, a cheap room?"

"I'm sorry," she says, and bent her head and went on.

It give me a little cold feeling. It come to me that maybe everything wasn't the way it looked.

"Come on, Mis' Bingy," I says, "it's getting late. We don't want to sleep out here to-night."

The room that we finally found was at the back and up two stairways, and it cost fifty cents more than we thought we'd pay, but we took it.

And now the singing in me that I'd been keeping down while there was things to do, come up through, the little funny singing that was all over me. I took out the two cards—

that I'd got only that morning, that seemed lifetimes back—and laid one of 'em on the bureau. It was Mr. Ember's card. The other one I wouldn't look up till to-morrow when I started out to find my work. But this one was his card, that he'd told me would find him. He'd been on his way back to the city that morning. By now he would be here. And I wasn't going to wait.

I put on my other shoes and a clean waist, and I told Mis' Bingy that I'd be back in a little while. She was going to try to go to sleep. I heard her lock the door before I got to the stairs, and I knew that she'd be afraid all the time that Keddie was going to find her.

Out on the street I asked how to get to the address on the card. It was on the far edge of the town: the policeman begun to tell me which car to take.

"I'll walk," I says.

"It'll take you an hour," says he.

"It's my hour," says I, and I started. But it come to me that that wasn't the way Mr.

## 80 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Ember would have thought anybody ought to answer, and I felt kind of sick. I thought, How was I going to remember to do all the ways I knew he'd want?

It took me more than an hour to walk it. It was 'most six o'clock when I finally turned in the little street, just a block long, where he lived. My heart begun to beat, while I walked along slow, looking at the numbers. It come to me that maybe he wouldn't be glad to see me.

Sixteen . . . eighteen . . . twenty-two . . . twenty-four, and that was his. It had a high brick fence—I could just see the roof over it—and a little picket gate standing open. I went along a short walk with green and yellow bushes on each side to a low porch with a door, that was standing open, too. And on the door was two cards: "Mr. Arthur Gordon" was on one. The other was his. Below them it said: "Visitors Enter."

So I went in, the way it said, through a low, bare, dim hall, and through a door on the right to a little room; and beyond was a big room,

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 81

with a queer, sloping window all over the ceiling. The room had pictures on the walls. And it was full of folks.

I stood by the door looking for him. It didn't seem possible that we could meet here, now, when I'd left him such a little while ago, there in Twiney's pasture. There was a good many different kinds of men, most of them smiling. They were looking at the pictures, or drinking from cups round a white table. I looked at them first, one after another; but none of them was him.

Then I begun noticing the women. They looked like the kind I'd seen in the *Weekly*, Saturdays, when there was pictures. They were all light-colored, with dresses that you couldn't tell how they were made, and hair that you couldn't remember how it was done up, and soft voices that went up and down, different from any I'd ever heard. I could hear what some of them near me were saying, but there was none of it that I could understand, nor what it was about, nor what the names meant. And all of a sudden I see through it:

## 82 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

These folks must all have done the things he had done—Asia, Europe, volcanoes—and they could talk about it his way. These were the kind of people he was used to.

Right near me was a woman in a dress that looked like I've seen the clouds look like, all showing through pink, with a hat like I'd never seen except once in a window when I was waiting for Mother and her teeth. I remember just what the woman said—I stood saying it over, like when I was learning a piece for elocution class, home. She says:

"I beg your pardon? But I fancy Mr. Ember would call that effect far from artificial . . ."

They walked by me. I stood there, saying over and over what she had just said about Mr. Ember. I didn't know what it meant, but it made me remember something. It made me remember the way I'd talked to him that morning, and the song I'd sung him, running backward on the road and trying to flirt with him; and that about his not giving me his right name.



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING '83

"Pardon me," somebody near me said, "I wonder if I may serve you in any way?"

I didn't half see the man who spoke to me. I just shook my head, and slipped out the door and out of the little yard.

## CHAPTER V

**I**T was that night that I begun this book. I'd brought in a loaf of bread and a little warming pan and a can of baked beans. We het the beans over the gas-jet and made a good supper—the water in the wash pitcher was all right to drink. Then Mis' Bingy went to bed with the baby, and I got out the paper I'd fixed, and I started. It seemed as though I must. I had the feeling that I wanted to get out from the place I was in. Home, when I felt like that, I used to sweep the parlor or shampoo my hair, or try to get Father to leave me earn some money, helping him. Once I took my egg money and started lessons on our organ. But such things don't get you anywheres. And it seemed as though the book would help.

I didn't know anything to write about, only just me. It come to me that I ought to tell

about me. But nothing worth writing had ever happened to me till just that morning. So I started in, and wrote near all night—down to the part where we got to the city. The gas smelled bad. I always remember that night. Before I knew it, it was getting light in the window. Then I put up the paper and crawled over back of Mis' Bingy and the baby, and went to sleep. And when I went to sleep, and when I woke up in the morning, the same thing was in my head right along—that mebbe I could get to be enough different so's I could see him again, some day. Because I knew I wasn't never going to let him see me again while I was the way I was now. But I wondered how to get different.

"Mis' Bingy," I says next morning, "how do folks get different?"

"Hard work and trouble, mostly," she says.

"I don't mean backward," I says. "I mean frontward."

She shook her head. "I donno," she says. "I used to think about that, some."

We had the rest of the beans and bread, and

## 86 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

then I started out. After she got the baby dressed, Mis' Bingy was going out to set in the green place where we'd been yesterday.

"I could work," she says, "if it wasn't for the baby. She's lots of work, too. But that don't earn us nothing."

She was always making lace, and she'd brought along a lot she made—the bottom drawer of the washstand was full of it. Making that, and tending the baby, kep' her occupied; but, as she said, it didn't earn us anything.

I had the other card that Mr. Ember had given me, and that morning I started out to find the man. John Carney, the name was, and it was a long ways to walk. It was in a big office building. And when I got to the right door, a smart young guy behind a fence says, What did I want to see Mr. Carney about, and wouldn't one of the men in the office do? I just give him Mr. Ember's card to take in, and when he'd gone I felt glad; because if it had been the day before, when I hadn't seen that room full of folks nor heard the woman

in the pinkish dress speak like she done, I bet I'd of said to that young guy: "You go and chase yourself to the pasture and quit your fresh lip." Just like Lena Curtsy would have said.

I had to wait quite a while till they sent for me. And when I went in the office, long and like a parlor in a picture, I stood in front of a big gray man whose shoulders were the principal part. And there was a little young man there, sitting loose in a big easy chair, looking at a newspaper. I noticed the little young man particular, because he didn't look like anything, and he acted like so much. He didn't belong in the office. He just happened.

"What can I do for you, madam?" says the big gray man, with Mr. Ember's card in his hand. "Mr. Carney is absent in Europe."

"Oh," I says, "then I don't know. Mr. Ember thought Mr. Carney'd maybe help me to get a job."

The little young man spoke up.

"I expect you'll meet up with a good deal of that kind of thing, Bliss," he says, glancing

## 88 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

up from his newspaper and glancing down again. "Everybody sends 'em to my uncle. He—makes it a point to know of things. He's a regular employment agency, d'y'see, for the jobless friends of his friends. I—er—shouldn't let it bother me."

The big gray man was real nice and regretful.

"I'm genuinely sorry," he said. "I really am. I happen to know Ember a little—I'd be glad to oblige him. But this—we don't need a thing here. I'm sorry Mr. Carney is away. It's unfortunate, but he *is* away, for some months."

He said a few more things polite, and he took down my name and address and said if anything *should* turn up . . . And I happened to think of something. If we had to wait very long, it might bother some about the rent.

"You don't think it would be very long, do you?" I says. "On account of Mis' Bingy and my rent."

"I wish I could promise something more,"

says the big gray man, looking back on his desk papers. "I'm sorry. Good morning."

I didn't think till afterward that he'd never even troubled to ask me what I could do.

Then the little young man that had been setting loose in his chair, sat up loose, and spoke loose, too.

"I say," he said, "if she's a friend of Ember's, I might give her a card to the factory."

"I shouldn't trouble if I were you, Arthur," says the big gray man, sharp; which I didn't think was very nice of him.

But the little young man, tipping his cigar so's the smoke would keep out of his eyes, and squinting back from it, took out a card and scrawled on it and tossed it across the table toward me.

"You might try that," he says. And shook himself, loose again, and strolled out the door. He walked loose, too.

I thanked him and put the card away, and went down in the elevator. It was the same elevator, it turned out, that the little young man had taken, but of course he didn't notice me.

## 90 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

When I got down I asked the man at the door how to get to the address of the factory that was written on the card. He said it was about two miles, and told me with his thumb which way. While I was trying to make out which way he meant, I stood for a minute in the street doorway. And there was the little young man again.

"Do you know how to get to the factory?" he asked.

"Yes. On my two feet," I says back, and started.

"You don't mean to say you're going to walk all that way?" he says, following me a step or two.

"No," I says, "I don't mean to say it, as I know of."

"Look here," he says, "my car is here at the side door. I'm on my way over to the factory now. Can't I give you a lift?"

I thought for a minute. I was awful tired. If I walked all that way and then home, I'd have to spend ten cents for lunch that would be enough for Mis' Bingy and me both at night.



The little young man was a friend of Mr. Carney's, that was a friend of Mr. Ember's . . .

"We'll be there in ten minutes," he says.

"Much obliged," I says, and went with him.

He had a nice little shiny two-seated car that he engineered himself. When we was headed down the avenue he says:

"My name is Arthur Carney. I'm Mr. Carney's nephew."

I remembered about the awful things I'd said to Mr. Ember, so I answered just as nice as I knew how: "I'm Cosma Wakely."

"Do you live here in town?" he ask' me.

"No," I says. "I just come from Katytown last night. Yes, I do live here now—I forgot."

"Really," he says.

The car went so quick and smooth and even I could have sung because I was in it. I'd never been in an automobile before.

"Oh," I says, "ain't this just grand?"

He looked over at me—he had a real white face and gold glasses and not much of any hair showed. His clothes and his gloves was like new, and some white cuffs peeked out.

## 92 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I think so," he says. "I'm glad you do."

"I meant the car," I says; and then I was afraid I'd made another mistake, like I had with Mr. Ember, and that the car was what the little young man had meant, too.

But he was looking at me and laughing.

"You're awfully sure what you mean, aren't you?" he says. "Are you always that sure?"

I kept thinking that he was Mr. Carney's nephew, and that Mr. Carney was Mr. Ember's friend. I wanted to answer him like I knew Mr. Ember would like. I'd answered him saucy when he first spoke to me, but that was part because I was embarrassed. So I didn't say anything at all. I didn't care whether he thought I was a country girl and a stick or not. I wanted to act nice.

"What made you run away from me yesterday?" he says.

"Yesterday?" I ask' him.

"At Gordon's studio," he says. "You don't mean to say you've forgotten that I spoke to you when you stood in the doorway? And you ran away."

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 93

I ask' him, before I meant to, "Was Mr. Ember there?"

"Ember? No," he says; "he's never here. He works off in God-forsaken spots. How are you going to like the city?"

I looked down the shiny crowded street. All to once I saw it different. Before that I'd been thinking he might be in every crowd.

"It's awful lonesome here," I says.

The policeman at the corner held up his hand, and we had to sit still and wait. The little young man leaned on the wheel.

"I hope you'll let me keep you from getting too lonesome," he says.

I turned round on him. In another minute I'd have given him the thing I always tried to say back, smart and quick. "When I'm that lonesome, I'll go traveling back home again," was what come in my head. Instead of that, all at once I wondered what the woman in the pinkish dress and hat in the studio would have said. And I said what she did say:

"I beg your pardon?"

He laughed. "All right," he said, and started

## 96 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

been cursing myself that I didn't follow you. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you come into that office this morning. Why in the world would you want to be different?"

I wanted to say, "Because I want something more than that in mine!" But I didn't. I spoke just regular.

"No," I says, "I mean true. I mean, learn things. Not school things, but how to do. How do you start out? I mean, if it's me?"

He kept looking at me, in between guiding his car.

"So that's it!" he says. "And you want me to tell you?"

"Yes!" I says. "More than anything else." He turned his car into a side street, and run it slow. We was almost to the factory, I judged. I could see smoke and big walls.

"You can have whatever schooling or training there is in this town that you want—anywhere else," he says to me, "if you just say the word."

It was just the way Mr. Ember had spoken, and Mr. Ember had meant that I mustn't think

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 97

there was nothing else for me only just what I'd got, if I was willing to work for something more. So I see the little young man must think as he did.

"It's nice to think so," I says.

"Do you mean it?" says he.

"Why, of course," I says. "Is this the factory?"

"You insist on trying for a job?" he says.

"Why, yes," I says. "Don't you think I can get one?"

"Sure you can get one," he says, "if I say the word."

I wondered how he done what he done. It wasn't five minutes that I waited in the stuffy dirty room by the gate into the factory yard, before a man come and told me to go up to the next floor.

When I crossed the yard the little young man come out of a door and he says to me:

"Good-by, and good luck to you." And he adds low, "I'll be waiting for you at six o'clock at the door we came in."

"Oh," I says, "don't you do that, Mr. Car-

## 98 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

ney! Mr. Ember wouldn't want me to trouble the other Mr. Carney or you either, not that much."

He scowled. "This isn't exactly on his account, you know."

And when he went off he didn't take off his hat to me, like Mr. Ember had done, and like I thought city men always done.

I kept thinking all that over while they started me in to work, punching holes in a card. I thought about it so hard that when night came I asked the forewoman if I could walk to the car with her. I thought I could take the street-car, now I had a job. She was a big red woman. "That don't work with me, you'll find," she says, and went past me. I guess she didn't understand what I said. So I went out with some of the other girls, and it just happened that I got out another door than the one I went in, and on to the street-car.

I bought a can of peas and four rolls and five cents butter, to celebrate.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, when I went in,

A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 99

“scratch a match, and start the cook stove up there on the wall! I’ve got a job for three dollars a week, from eight till six. Didn’t I tell you everything’d be easy?”

## CHAPTER VI

I COUNTED up, and found if we were to have enough for room rent and food, I couldn't spend any sixty cents a week for car-fare. So I left home at seven every morning and walked to work. At night I was so tired I took the car. Then we'd have supper on the gas-jet, and I'd try to write; but almost always I was so sleepy I went right to bed.

Mis' Bingy had got so she didn't cry so much. She didn't take much comfort going out to walk, she was so afraid of Keddie finding her.

"It's comfort enough not to feel I'm goin' to be murdered every night," she says. "I'd just as lieve set here."

After we'd been there three days, I wrote to Mother and to Luke. To Mother I said:

"DEAR MOTHER:

"We are well, and hope this finds you the same. I have got a job. We are all right,



and hope you are. I hope the boys are all right, and Father. Mis' Bingy says for you to be sure to tell her the news when you write. Mis' Bingy and the baby are well, and I am the same. So good-by now.

"COSMA."

I read it over, and wondered about it. I had never been away from home before long enough to write a letter to them. And I couldn't think of anything to say. It seemed to me I was a little girl in my letter. I wondered if that was because they thought that was what I was.

Then I wrote to Luke. You'd think that would have been harder, but it was easier. I says:

"DEAR LUKE:

"They told you, I guess, how I come off with Mis' Bingy. But, Luke, I would of come anyway, if I could. I thought it was all right to be your wife, but I want to see if there is anything else I would rather do. So I'm not engaged to you any more. If I come back, and if you are not married to somebody else, all right, if you still want me by that time. But I don't think I'll come back for a long time.

## 102 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I told you I didn't think I loved you, and you said I had to marry somebody. But now I don't, Luke, because I got a job. Please don't think hard of me. This was meant right, Luke.

"COSMA."

I wrote another letter, too—just because it felt good to be writing it. It said:

"DEAR MR. EMBER:

"I want you to know I done as you said. I left home, and I left Luke, and I'm going to see if there is anything in the world for me to be that I can get to be. I've got a job, and I've got you to thank for that. Mr. Carney's nephew got it for me.

"There's something I want to say to you that's hard to say. I want you to know that the walk that morning was the nicest thing that ever happened to me. It made me see that the cheap me—the vulgar me, like you said—wasn't the only me there is to me. Clear inside is something that can be another me. I knew that before, in the grove, and early in the morning, like I said. But I didn't think I could ever let it out enough to be me. I didn't trust it, not till you came.

"And that's what makes me think I can be different, the way you said to. I'd hate for you to think I was just the sassy girl I acted that morning. There's something else I can't

bear to have you think—that's that I didn't know how different I acted at the table from what you did. I did know.

"I've got a job, and Mis' Bingy and the baby are here—I knocked her husband down before I come because he was drunk and was going to kill her, so we thought we better leave there. That was how we come. But I guess I would have come anyway after I talked with you.

"Your friend,

"COSMA WAKELY."

"P. S.—I say *Cosma* all the time now."

I sealed it up and directed it, and slipped it in my book. I wouldn't send it; but it was nice to write it.

The second day I was in the factory, a girl come to me in the hall and asked me if I'd go out with her to lunch. I said I had my roll and a banana; but I'd walk along with her and eat 'em. She said that was what she meant—she had some crackers and an apple. So we walked down the block. Her name was Rose Everly.

There was a place half-way along there where some policemen were always sitting out, and when we went past there one of them

spoke to her. She stopped, and she gave me an introduction.

"Miss Wakely," she says, "you meet Sergeant Ebbit."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance," says he. "How's the strike coming on?"

"I don't know as I know anything about any strike," she says, throwing up her head.

"How about you?" he says to me. "You whinin' too?"

I didn't know what he meant, and I guess he see I didn't. He laughed, and brought us out a couple of oranges.

"I'll be the first to run in the both of you, though," he says, "if you start any nonsense."

"What's he mean?" I says, when we went on.

"He's new over here, or he wouldn't be so sassy, not to me," says Rose. "Well, I brought you out here to put you wise."

Then she told me, while we walked up and down and et our oranges.

It seems there was things in the factory that I didn't have any notion about. My own job was in the printing office, connected with

the factory. I was running a Gordon press, at slow speed, learning to feed it right. At the first of the next week, I was going to be put on full speed. We was to print from twelve thousand to fifteen thousand envelopes a day, then; and I knew what that meant, from watching the other machines. There was a time keeper over the full-speed machines, and it was hurry, hurry, hurry, all day long. It was all right while I was learning it, but I hated to think about making the same motion twelve or fifteen thousand times every day. In our room there was sixty or so. I used to notice the air, it smelled of some kind of gas and it was full of paper dust. When they swept up they never wet the broom; and when I asked the man if he didn't know enough to do that he swore at me. It wasn't a nice place to work.

But it seems there was other things that I didn't know about yet. There was fines for everything, and dockings for most that many. We had to go through the other factory to get out, and it seems they locked the doors on us as soon as we got in, and of course that was

bad if there'd be a fire. Then there was things about the foreman; and there wasn't any Saturday half-holiday. And it seems the girls had joined together and asked for better things. And Rose wanted to know if I'd be one of them.

"Sure," I says, "is there anybody that won't?"

"Them that's afraid of their jobs," she says. "If we don't get what we think we ought to have, we'll—quit. We're going to have a meeting to-morrow night. Can you come, and will you talk?"

"Sure I'll come," I says. "But I can't talk. I don't know enough."

The sergeant says something else to us when we come back.

"He'll likely be running us both in for getting a row made at us, picketing, next week at this time," Rose said. At the door she took hold of my arm. "Good for you!" she says. "We was all afraid of you when we heard about Carney."

"What do you mean?" I asked her.

"'Bout Arthur Carney gettin' you your job," she says.

"Yes," I says. "What's that got to do with it?"

She laughed. "You baby!" she says. "Don't you know he owns the whole outfit?"

"The *factory?*" I says.

He owned most of it, she told me. I kept going over that all the while I fed my machine. And I kept going over what he'd said to me in his car. I felt as if I didn't want to see him again, no matter how much he talked about school; but I tried not to think that, because he was Mr. Carney's nephew, and Mr. Carney was Mr. Ember's friend.

I went to the meeting, as I said I would; but it was hard for me to make much out of it. There was all these things ought to be changed in the factory, and we knew it, and we thought we'd ought to have a little more wages; I wanted more when I began on full speed, but I didn't think I was going to get it. It seemed to me the thing to do was to ask to have things changed, and, if they didn't do it,

## 108 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

quit till they did change them. But at the meeting I found that there was those that was afraid to ask—just for fire-escapes and decent cleanliness and a few cents more a week and extra pay for overtime. And then I found out something else, that if they wouldn't give us these things and we did quit, there was some of us that wouldn't agree to quit, and maybe others that would come in and take our jobs, and put up with what we had been trying to make better. When I got that through my head, I stood right up at the meeting to ask a question.

"They couldn't take our jobs if we stood out in front and tried to get it into their heads what we was trying to do, could they?" I says. "Ain't it just because they don't see what we're trying to do?"

They all laughed, and the woman that was speaking—somebody from outside the factory—says yes, she thought that was it, they didn't see what we were trying to do.

The next day was Sunday, and I could hardly wait. I was up early and out while



Mis' Bingy was still asleep. I hated to leave her all day, but it seemed as if ever since I come to the city something out there was calling me. I dunno where I went. I tramped for miles, and I spent fifteen cents car-fare, besides transfers, but I didn't care. I had some rolls in a bag, and I et them when I didn't show. And I looked and looked.

I found hundreds of folks, going off for all day, washed and dressed up and with lunches and children, headed out in the country, I judged. Some of them looked like Father and Mother and Mis' Bingy, and as if they couldn't be any other way. I set on the car with them, and kind of see *through* them, and knew how they must snap each other up, home, when they wasn't dressed up. I wondered what God wanted so many for, that couldn't be different because it was too late. But some, and most of all the children, looked as if they might have been most anybody, if they were given a chance. I wondered how they could get the chance, and if none of them tried. I wondered how I could try. I knew I'd never

## 110 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

get it in the factory. No matter if we got all the things we were asking for, it was a dog's life—I knew that already. It wasn't much better than Bert and Henny had, to the blast furnace. They got dirty, and had to work straight twenty-four hours once every two weeks; but they made their dollar-twenty a day, and not any of us done that. I kept trying to think how to get started.

At the end of one car line I got off and walked over to the river. There was beautiful houses there—more beautiful than I had ever seen, even in the pictures. I thought they must have awful big families, they had so many up-stairs rooms. The grass looked combed and fluffed, much better than the babies' hair around the factory. Somebody give an awful lot of time to the flowers, and the river showed through the bushes. I liked the nice curtains, and when automobiles went by I liked to look at the ladies, they seemed so clean and tended. But I wondered why.

I stood looking through the iron fence of a great big house when a policeman come along.

I says to him, before he could get passed, "I was wishing I knew the names of the folks that live in there."

He stopped like a wall that knew how to walk. "Well, missy," says he, "and was ye thinkin' of buyin' it in?"

"No," I says, "not with nothin' but you to watch it." And then I walked on fast, and felt sick, sick at myself. Not one of them tended ladies in the automobiles would have spoke like that. And Mr. Ember would have hated me if he'd heard me say it. How did folks ever get over being smart and quick, and be just regular?

After a while, I come past a big church, and I went in. I never liked church, because the minister had always kept at me to join and I didn't think I was good enough. But I knew nobody would ever ask me to join here. There was one reason, though, why I liked it, even home—everybody acted nice, and like there was company. Once I said that, home, to the table, when everybody was jawing, "Let's act like we was in church," I said. But it made

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## 112 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Father mad, and he couldn't understand that I hadn't meant the being good part at all. I only meant the acting nice part.

In the church it was like that, just as if everybody had company and was on their good behavior. They set me in the gallery, and I could see the whole crowd. The hats was grand. But the nicest was the colors in the dresses and the windows and the flowers. It was funny, but something in them made me hurt. And when the music burst out sudden, it hurt me so that I dropped my bag of rolls so's to get down and pick them up, and get my mind off my throat. I was thinking about it afterward, and it was the first music I'd ever heard except our reed organ in church, and Lena Curtsy's piano, and the movies, and the circus band. And even the circus band had hurt my throat, too.

I never knew a word the man said, I mean the minister. He didn't talk anyhow—he just kept on about something, as if he was trying to make somebody mean something they didn't mean. But I liked being there. Everybody

seemed like they ought to seem. I wondered if they was. I couldn't seem to see *through*, like I could with the folks in the street-car. It didn't seem possible that those folks down there ever yipped out about anything to each other, and, anyway, what could they have to yip out about? They were all clean and tended, too. Afterward I stood in the door and watched them pour out, talking fast, and drive off. I liked to see them close to, and hear the way they said their words. It made a real nice morning, but I never heard a word about God.

I et my rolls in the park, and I stayed there a good while. The sun or the green or something made me feel good. I tried to look at the animals, but I hated it in the smelly places, with the poor live things in cages. When they tore around and couldn't sit still in any one place, I thought it was just like Mother and Father and the boys and Mis' Bingy, they all had to stay in a little place they didn't like, doing what they didn't want to do. I didn't blame any of them for being ugly. The more

into his office there was Mr. Arthur, and he left me there with him. Mr. Arthur's hat was on the back of his head, and his light hair was flat down on his forehead, and his light-colored eyes and eyebrows made me want to get away from him, even if he was Mr. Ember's friend.

"Child," he says to me, "why are you trying to avoid me? I've found a place for you where you can go and learn as much as you want. I've been waiting to tell you about it. Don't you trust me?" he says.

I says, "I'd trust any friend of Mr. Ember's."

"Well," he says, "anyhow, trust me. I'll call here for you to-night, and you let me tell you what I've got planned for you."

"I'm going to meet with some of the girls to-night, Mr. Carney," I says.

"Cut that out," he says. "Come with me."

I laughed at that. "You act like your way was the way things are," I says.

"I wish it were," he says, "I wish it were."

"Listen, Mr. Carney," I says. "I've got a good job, and I like the girls. It's a dirty, dis-

agreeable place to work, and we'd ought to have a good many things we haven't got," I says to him, "but I guess I'll stick it out for a while. I couldn't come to-night, anyway."

"I'll wait for you to-morrow night, then," he says. "We'll have a little dinner somewhere, and a run in the car—"

It was getting awful hard to remember to act nice, and I spilled over.

"You got the ways of a hitching-post," I says; "but you ain't got the tie-strap." And I walked out and left him there.

Two nights he run his car down to the door where he'd found I come out. Once I pretended not to see him, and run and caught a street-car. Once he jumped out and walked along beside me, and the girls fell back. I told him Mis' Bingy and I were going to have a banquet of wieners, fried on the gas-jet, and I couldn't come. He put a note in my hand, he never seemed to care what anybody thought, I noticed that about him.

Mis' Bingy and I read the note, while the wieners were frying.

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"Don't keep me waiting," it said. "I want to see you the glorious creature you could be if you had the training you say you want. Music, riding, whatever you ask for, you shall have it all, on my honor. Don't I deserve a little more confidence from you?"  
A. C."

Mis' Bingy rocked back and forth on the bed.

"Cossy Wakely," she said, "it's my fault, it's my fault. I brung you. Let's us go back, Cossy, right off. Let's us go back."

"Oh, pshaw, Mis' Bingy!" I says, "I guess he means it right. We're just—vulgar."

"Oh, what a world," says Mis' Bingy. "Ain't there no place women can get shed of men, with their drunkenness and their devilment?"

I couldn't feel that way a bit. "I don't want to," I says. "I want to find the other kind of men. There is them!"

We had a nice supper, and then I wrote in this book. It was beginning to be so I could hardly wait to get at it. I wondered if that was the way Mr. Ember felt about his work. Then I thought about the factory, and remem-



bered that that was work, too. It didn't seem as if they ought to have the same name.

Next morning Rose went up the stairs with me.

"You know you'll either have to quit your job or else give in, don't you?" she says.

I looked at her.

"Are you sure?" I says, "I thought maybe my being afraid of him was just being—vulgar."

"You baby," she says. "It ain't your fault. Everybody understands. We always tell the new pretty ones. But he brought you here—"

I tried to think what to do, all that day, while I fed the press. I could think well enough—the work was just one motion, one motion, one motion, and I didn't have to think about that. But I knew in a little while the rest of my head wouldn't think while I worked, and that I should just stand there with the smell of the oil and the ink and the gas and the paper dust, and the noise. I wondered what we was all doing it for, just to earn money to keep breathing, and to supply Mr. Arthur Carney with

## 120 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

money for "little dinners somewhere," and the shiny car. It didn't seem worth while, not for any of us.

At noon Rose and I walked again, she wanted to tell me about a meeting for that night. They'd heard that morning from Mr. Carney. He wouldn't give in on one of the things, except to promise to unlock the doors while we worked. "But he's promised that before," Rose says. "It don't last. We're going to take the vote to-night on walking out."

"What!" says Sergeant Ebbit, when we come by. "Ain't you two struck yet?"

"Don't you want to be?" says Rose, pretending to hit at him. I don't know how any of us can act nice, with everybody joshing us so free.

I promised to go to the meeting, and that meant that I couldn't go home to supper, because it was so far to walk back. And when I come out the door, there was Mr. Carney's car, and him walking toward me. I never stopped a minute. I walked straight through the girls and got into his car. He jumped in after me and banged the door. I heard the

A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 121

girls titter. "You glorious thing," I heard him say ; and I says, low :

"I've got one errand, though. Will you take me there?"

"Anywhere under heaven," he says.

## CHAPTER VII

I SHOWED Mr. Carney which way. We went past the girls, and round the corner, and straight down the narrow street where we always walked eating our lunch. I motioned where to stop. I jumped out. Sergeant Ebbitt was alone just inside the door of the police station.

"Hello, Beauty," he says; "what can I do for you?"

I says, "I want you to come out here and arrest a fresh young guy with a car, that's been bothering me."

He jumped up and followed. He was new there, as Rose had said, and then he kind of liked me, too. I'd known that several days, and I was depending on it now. He come hurrying, like I thought he would, and he says, "I know them fool kids, and I'll learn 'em, if

A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 123

you say so." And before he see Mr. Carney he blew his whistle.

"That's him," I says, pointing to the little shiny car.

It makes me laugh now to remember the sergeant's face. But another policeman was coming, running. And folks stopped and stared. And I slipped out the station door quick, and turned the corner and dodged straight across the factory yard and took to my heels.

It was after six o'clock, so the streets were alive. I walked along, never noticing where I was going. I looked down the street. As far as I could see there went the heads, men and women, bobbing along home. Half of them, I thought, had just the same kind of box to live in that Mis' Bingy and I had. Yet there they was, going to work every day by clock-work, always thinking something good was going to come of it. I tramped along with them. There was something good in the way our feet all come down on the walk together. In spite of everything, I felt fine. But I guess

that was because I was young and well. Some of them that passed me, their heads didn't stay up and their feet dragged. And they didn't seem to know each other was there. If only they could have felt the good feeling of marching together, it seemed to me they'd be less tired.

"They've got to find out different," I thought. "How can they?"

The most of them crossed east on Broadway and under a covered place with bells clanging. I saw the sign "Brooklyn Bridge," so I went up the steps and out on the bridge, and I walked clear across it and back again. I'll never forget that walk. I was looking at the others and looking at them—the folks that was workers, like me. I seemed to know something about them they didn't know. It seemed as if I had to do something.

A bunch of little young girls passed me, all laughing. They seemed years younger than I was. I thought of them—of the day they'd had in the factory—bad air, noise, work that was dead before it was born, and maybe a

home where there was rows, or maybe just nobody at all; and somebody like Arthur Carney coming to help them be a little less lonesome. And then I faced it honest: Suppose he hadn't had flat hair and light eyes. Suppose he had looked different, so that I would have *wanted* to go to dinner with him?

I begun to walk fast, back to town. Across the bridge I went in a little down-stairs place to get something to eat. I was thinking so hard I never knew I'd ordered a quarter's worth till I got the bill. But I didn't care much. Everything else seemed all of a sudden to matter so much more.

That night, when I walked into the meeting, they all stared. I s'pose the word had got round that I'd gone with him. I whispered to Rose that I wanted to say something, and she give me a chance right away. When I got up on the platform and faced 'em, I wasn't afraid. I was glad.

I told them that just because I had got to leave, I didn't want them to think I was going to forget. And that they mustn't forget,

either. "It ain't caught me yet," I told 'em. "I'm new and from the country, and I can see what it is that you're getting, like you can't see. And what I say is this: Quit your hoping. Just know that until we get together ourselves, nothing will come out of the factory except what we're getting now. Quit your hoping, and help. That's my last word."

And yet I guess you can't blame anybody for being afraid of being hungry. I'd never been hungry yet, so I was brave.

I didn't tell Mis' Bingy that night that I'd lost my job. I didn't tell her till next morning when she woke up, scared that I was late. We went out in the park with the baby.

"We'll be all right, Mis' Bingy," I says, "don't you worry."

I was sitting on the grass. And when I spoke so, I happened to see my foot sticking from under my skirt. The whole half of my shoe sole had come off, and was gone, and the nails was all showing. Ten days' rent it would take to buy me another pair.

Just now I tore out thirty pages of this



book. And just now I read them over. They made me sick to read them, not because of what was there, but because of what wasn't there. It was the same thing over and over again all that time. Hat factory, ribbon factory, braid factory, silk factory, and ten weeks rolling stogies. Some places the girls cared, and was trying to make others care to get things better. In others it was get what you could, look your best, and marry the first man that asked you.

Every place I went, I begun asking about the things that Rose had taught me about—fines, and dockings, and fire safety, and the rest. Then I talked to the girls. That was why I didn't "last."

"You'll get used to things one of these days," says a forelady to me.

"That's what I'm afraid of," I told her.

But the worst was, there wasn't any fun. There wasn't anything to go to, and, anyhow, I couldn't afford the car-fare back in the evening.

Mis' Bingy had found a place where she could leave the baby a little while every day,

128 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

and she done some cleaning. We moved out of our first room to one farther up that didn't cost so high. I got so I begun to think ahead, nights.

Then one night when I come in, the lady we rented of says a lady had been there to see me; "A lady," she says, "that come in a automobile and says her words as careful as if she was a-singin' in the church. She's a-comin' back again."

And when she come, she stood by the table and says:

"Miss Wakely, I am Mis' Arthur Carney."

"My land!" I says. It had never entered my head that he might have a wife on top of everything else.

"I have been hearing," she says, "of what you did some time ago. I mean about—Mr. Carney. I have come to find you, because it seemed to me that you must be a remarkable girl."

"Oh, Mis' Carney," I says, "nobody needs to be remarkable to think of getting *him* arrested."

And then I remembered something: "Yes, sir!" I says, "it was you! It was you that was in the pinkish dress in Mr. Ember's house that day!"

And I told her what she had been saying when she passed the door. But all I was thinking was—she knew him. She knew Mr. Ember, too!

She talked to me a long time. She didn't ask me many questions—and I didn't tell her much about me, but still in a little while we felt real acquainted. And pretty soon she says:

"I came really, you know, to see whether you had found another position—after you left that one. I've had a good deal of a time finding you out. What have you done since? What are you doing now?"

I told her some of it.

"And what do you want to do?" she says then.

I don't know what give me the courage. It was just like something in me said: "Tell her. Tell her. Tell her." And I said it.

"Oh," I says, "I'd work my head off if I

## 130 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

could go somewheres to school. But I don't want to know just school things. I want to know more than them. . . ."

"What do you want to know?" she says.

It was funny how easy it was to talk to her. Father or Mother or Luke or Mis' Bingy, that I'd known all my life, I couldn't have explained things to like I could to her. But I think that was part because she didn't need everything all said out in sentences, and then it was part because I knew she wouldn't make a fuss at me when I got through.

When she went away: "I'm going to look around a little," she says, "I'll come back in a few days."

"But, oh," I says, "you know, there's Mis' Bingy and the baby. I couldn't do anything that'd take me away from her. I don't know why you bother with me anyway," I says.

She had the loveliest dignified way. "We owe you something, my husband and I," she says.

But of course I knew that that was just her manner of speaking, and that her husband

didn't know a thing about what she was doing, and that probably it was one of those speeches that everybody keeps making, like when Mis' Bingy talked, in the depot, of taking her baby away from "a father's care."

She went off in her automobile, and I stood on the step looking after her. The very thought that there could be anybody in the world like her, that would do what she'd done, made me feel like I understood the earth. I told Mis' Bingy, and she sat a long time looking out the window with her mouth open.

"If Keddie had done that," she says, "I bet a quarter of a pound of tea, I'd blame the girl."

I'd have thought everybody would. We talked it over.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "maybe they's ways to be decent we don't even *know* about."

She kep' her mouth open. "Then who's to blame if we don't act up to 'em, I donno," she says, after a while.

"I donno, too," I says. "It must be somebody, though."

And we both thought it must be.

## 132 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

The next day was Sunday, and Mis' Bingy and I done what we'd been going to do for a long time. We walked up to the park, and inside the big building where the pictures are. Mis' Bingy set on a bench and fed the baby, while I wandered round.

I guess you're supposed to feel nice and real awed when you first go to that big place. I guess you're supposed to be glad you live in a city where they're free to you. I thought I was going to have a good time. But instead of that I kept getting madder and madder. Once I begun to talk out loud, and I was afraid they'd put me out. It was when I come to a big room full of statues, with one big white one that said under it "Apollo." I'd never heard the name. I says to the man in the hall:

"Can you tell me who that Apollo was—and why he's stuck up here?"

"Catalogues twenty-five cents each, at the door," says the man.

"Well," I says, "I ain't got the quarter to spare. But I thought mebbe you knew."

"He was the Greek god of beauty and song,"

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 133

he says, stiff. And the next thing I knew I was standing there in front of the Greek god talking out loud. And I says:

"I'd like to twist the nose off your face, just because I've never heard of you before—nor you—nor you—nor you. *Why* ain't I never heard of you?"

I run for Mis' Bingy.

"Mis' Bingy," I says, "are you ready to go?"

She followed me without a word. Out on the steps she says, shaking:

"Which was it—Keddie or Carney?"

"It was neither," I says, "it was that smart white god in there, and all the rest of 'em. Mis' Bingy! Folks *know* about 'em. They know when they go there, and they know about pictures. I heard 'em talking. What's the reason we don't know?"

"Go on!" says Mis' Bingy. "We ain't the kind of folks them things are calculated for."

"It's a lie!" I says. "It's a lie! I could almost like 'em now—only I got so mad."

I set down on a bench in the park, and cried. And I didn't care who heard me.

## 134 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Mis' Bingy stood up, waiting for me, hushing the baby back and forth on her hip.

"I use' to feel like that when I was a girl," she says. "You'll get over it." She kept saying that, several times. "You'll get over it, Cossy," as if she thought it was some comfort.

"That's what I'm afraid of," I says, after a while.

We transferred at Eighth Street on the way down, because there was something else I'd heard about and I hadn't ever seen yet. We walked east through the square, under the arch, and I asked a policeman for what I was looking for, and he showed me: The top story where the fire had been in a factory. The girls had told me about it, and I told Mis' Bingy, and we stood and looked. That was where they had jumped from. That was where they had hit the sidewalk, a hundred and eighteen of them, smashed or burned to death.

"It might have been you, Cossy," Mis' Bingy says, staring up and swinging the baby.

"It *was* me," I says. "I felt like it was me



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 135

when I heard it—and I feel like it was me now.”

But I didn't want to cry for that. While I looked I got still inside, still and sick, and sure. I guess I felt like I was every factory girl in in New York. The hundred and eighteen wasn't the worst off—I knew that now. I wondered how many of them some Carney had chased, to “help them be a little less lonesome.” I wondered how many of them could talk English. I wondered how many of them ever had it in their heads for a minute that there was anything else for them only just what they had. Then I thought about that Greek god of beauty and song. And them hundred and eighteen and most of the other girls and Mis' Bingy and me never even knew there was such a guy.

Two days later Mis' Carney come back. The landlady had a book agent, entertaining him in the parlor, so I had to take her right up to our room. It was nice and clean, and Mis' Bingy always combed her hair and changed her dress after dinner, just like she had at

## 136 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

home afternoons, when she'd got the dishes washed up. She was making lace by the window, and the baby was on the floor. It was late, and we'd got a whole pie tin of wieners sizzling over the gas-jet.

"Mis' Carney, you meet Mis' Bingy," I says. But Mis' Carney hardly looked at her. She bent right over the pillow that Mis' Bingy's work was on..

"Do you mean," Mis' Carney said, "that you are actually making the lace? Here in New York?"

"Yes, ma'am," Mis' Bingy says. "Ma taught me—in the old country."

"Have you any of it made?" Mis' Carney says.

Mis' Bingy opened the washstand drawer and took out what she had, tied up in a pillow case. Mis' Carney set on the bed and took it in her hands. After a long time she looked up at me, and her face was lovely.

"Miss Wakely," she says, "I came to tell you what I have for you to do—and I was a good deal bothered—about your friend, Mis' Bingy.

But it seems to me that she can earn considerably more than you can—with her lace. I paid six dollars a yard for lace like this not a fortnight ago."

Then she turned to me. "You're going to a school right here in town," she said; "I have arranged everything. And now Mis' Bingy is going to find a larger room and make her lace."

The wieners had burned black before any of us noticed. If ever you seen the sky open back, I guess you know.

Mis' Carney asked me to spend Friday to Monday with her, and then she would take me over to the school.

"Have I got to see your husband?" I says to her, direct.

Her husband was in Europe, so that was how she could ask me. And Friday afternoon she come for me.

"We can take your trunk in the car, if it's a small one," she says.

"I ain't even got a satchel," I told her. "My other dress and things are in this here."

## 138 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Mis' Bingy was hanging over the bannister post, and the landlady with her.

"Don't you go and forget me, Cossy," says Mis' Bingy, crying.

The landlady used her face all the time like a strong light was in her eyes.

"She'll forget you, all right," she says. "I got two daughters somewheres that I never hear a word out of. Best say good-by and leave it go at that."

I always wanted everybody to tell the truth, but that woman sort of undressed it, and then told it. And it made a little hush, there in the hall.

Mis' Carney's house was big and still. She took me to a bedroom at the back, looking out on a square garden. The furniture was white, with rose-buds on, and there were gray and pink rugs on the floor. The light colored rugs seemed so wonderful—just as if it didn't matter if they did get soiled, no more than towels. Nor not so much so. On the wall was a little picture of a boat with a bright-colored sail, on a real blue sky. The minute I see it,

the whole thing kind of come over me. And I begun to cry.

"Oh, Mis' Carney," I says, "we got a picture in the parlor, home. But it don't look like that."

"Is that what you are crying for?" she asked.

"No," I says, "I don't think so. I was thinking about the bed. Mother and I looked at one in a show-window, once."

I remembered how Mother had stood and looked at it, all made up clean and pretty, even after I was tired and wanted to go on.

Saturday morning we went shopping. I'd never been down-town before when I wasn't walking fast to get somewheres. This was the first time I had ever *looked*. Everywhere there were people, hurrying and thinking.

"Look in this window, Cosma," Mis' Carney said as we went in a store. "How would you like that shade?"

But the man that was fixing the things looked like a man that sold mackintoshes at the county fair, and I watched him.

140 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"You ought to have a longish coat," she says, "you're so tall."

Just then I saw a woman with gray hair, and I stood staring at her, wondering if there was anybody's mother that looked as grand as her.

"Cosma," Mis' Carney said, "look at the things, please. Never mind the people."

"Never mind the people." I knew then that they were all I cared about. It wasn't so much the folks shopping that I saw—it was the girls, the whole army of girls that was waiting on them. When you get to look at the shops that way, then you know more about them than you did before. But the folks on the sidewalks kind of got me too. Out in the car I says to Mis' Carney:

"I know! It ain't just school or clothes or you that makes me feel good. It's something else. It's because I ain't worrying over the rent!"

I saw the folks on the sidewalks, all hurrying and thinking. I knew them all now. Half of them were worrying just the way I had been,

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 141

just the way Rose was, just the way all the girls did. I felt bad for them. I wanted to take them all off with me, to school or somewhere.

Then come the evening I'll never forget. Mis' Carney and I had dinner by ourselves in a little glass room just off the big dining-room; and afterward we went into the library. She was showing me some books, when a bell rung, somewhere off in the house, and a maid come with a card.

"Show him to the drawing-room," Mis' Carney said, and gave me a lot more books and left me. And then I heard his voice in the next room where she'd gone. I knew—the minute I heard him speak I knew. I dropped my books and run to the curtains and stood where I could see.

And Mr. Ember was standing by the table, with his face turned toward me, looking just like I'd seen him last, there in Twiney's pasture. One hand was resting on the table and the other was pushing his hair back from his forehead, two, three times, kind of as if he

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## 142 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

was tired. And when I see him, from my head to my feet I begun to tremble. I'd felt like that once or twice before—once when the team got scared and begun to back off the bridge.

"I'm in town for the rest of the winter," he was saying. "I've a few lectures to pull off—and a lot of proof to keep me busy. What have you been doing with yourself?"

Then my heart beat harder. What if she told him about me? And one minute I was sick with being afraid she would, and next minute I was wild for fear she wouldn't. I didn't want to see him. I'd said I wasn't going to see him till I could meet him sometime when I was the way I was going to be. But I'd have come pretty near to giving up my whole chance of ever being anything, just to have his hands shut over mine and to hear him say my name again.

She didn't tell him, Mrs. Carney wasn't the telling kind. In a few minutes they begun to talk of other things—Europe and Washington and theaters. And while I stood there, look-



ing at him and looking, it came over me that to be listening there wouldn't be the way Mrs. Carney would act, nor the way he'd meant me to act. So I looked at him once, hard enough to last, the best a look can last, and then I run away up to my room and locked the door. I stood in the middle of the floor and kind of flung myself on to something or somebody in the air, that it seemed to me *must* have been listening to me.

"Make me like I ain't," I says. "Make me different! Make me different—YOU!"

When I heard the door shut, I went back down-stairs. I wanted to be the next one to talk to her after he had. She was in the library, putting the books back. And her face was shining like I'd never seen it.

"Oh, Cosma," she said, "some people make you feel as if it's a good world!"

"It is," I says, "while they're around."

"Yes," she says, "it is—while they're around."

That was all she said. Pretty soon she went back in the drawing-room, and I followed her

## 144 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

so's to be where he had been. I'd been going to sit down in the chair where he had sat, but she sat down there. So I stood by the table. And I was glad it happened that neither of us said anything for quite a while.

## CHAPTER VIII

**T**HE school was three great buildings a little way from Mrs. Carney's house. I had never dreamed of anything so grand as those rooms seemed to me. What I couldn't get over was the padded carpets that you didn't make a sound when you walked on. The furniture was big pieces, all carved and hard to dust; and lights that didn't show was burning in the inside rooms. There was great vases, as tall as I, and pictures as big as the ceiling of Mrs. Bingy's and my whole room.

The first days at that school are the kind of nightmare that it hurts to remember even in the daytime. I begun by feeling so grand. By the second meal I was wretched. By the time the first evening was half over and the dancing in the gymnasium, I was sick. School wasn't the way I thought it was.

## 146 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

If only they'd taken me out and ducked me, or buried me, or left me on the roof all night every night. But the ways they had were like pouring vinegar in a skinned place in my heart. I ain't going to talk about it!

And yet I never minded their laughing, if only they looked at me when they laughed. But when they looked at each other and laughed, that killed me.

I'd been at the school about six months when one afternoon I was coming across the field that everybody called the "campus." I'd never called it that yet—it sounded like putting on. I met a lot of them coming down from their classes. I used to begin looking at them when they were way ahead, hoping there was somebody I knew and could speak to. I liked to speak to them. I'd had an introduction to most of them; but they didn't always remember me. When they did remember, they didn't always speak. Some of them done it on purpose. But always I knew which was such. That afternoon so many of them didn't speak to me that all of a sudden I felt crazy to get

away from them all, off somewhere by myself. I run down the hill back of the main building. A stone wall went along by the road. The wall was pretty high, but I put my hands on it the way I used to at home, and I jumped up on it with my head in some branches. And I says out loud:

"I know how Keddie Bingy used to feel when he got drunk."

"My word!" said somebody. "And how did he feel?"

I looked down, and there was an automobile drawn up by the wall and a man in it, rolling a cigarette.

"Don't you know?" I says.

"I don't know but I do," says he. "For example, I've been sitting here one-half hour waiting for my sister. Do I feel the way you mean?"

"Nothing like," I says, and turned to jump down again.

"Don't let me drive you away," he says; "I don't mean to bother you. I beg your pardon like anything."

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"It's all right," I said; "I was going. I didn't want to sit up here. I don't know what I got up here for, anyway."

I picked up my books, and he spoke again.

"If you're really going," he said, "I wonder if I could send a message by you?"

"Sure thing," I says.

"Do you know Antoinette Massy?" he asked.

"I know her when I see her," I said; "I never spoke to her."

"She's in the tennis court over there—or she said she'd be," he went on. "Would you mind telling her that her brother has been sitting here like an image for thirty-six minutes—up to now? And that in five minutes he won't be here any more?"

"Oh," I says, "Miss Massy! She went up to Mann Hall to rehearse, half an hour ago. They never get through till dinner time."

"Gad!" he said; "it takes a man's sister to put him in his true light." He done something to the car, and then looked at me. "Would—would you care to come for a little spin?" he asked.



"Would you care to come for a little spin?"





"I'd care like everything," I says; "but I can't go."

"No?" he says. "Yes, you can!"

"I'm not going," I says. "Thanks, though."

"Would you mind telling me why not?" he says. "Since you say you want to, you know."

I couldn't think of anything but the truth.

"I'm trying to act as nice as I can," I says, "since I've been to this school. And I guess it's nicer not to go with you."

His face was pleasant when he kept on looking at me, though he was laughing at me, too.

"Look here, then," he said, "will you go with my sister and me some day? As a favor to me, you know—so you'll get her here on time."

"Oh," I says, "I'd love to!"

"Done," he said. "Tell me your name, and I'll tell her we've got an engagement with her."

When he'd gone I jumped down from the wall and ran pell-mell up the hill. Before I knew it, I was humming. Ain't it the funniest thing how one little bit of a nice happening from somebody makes you all over like new?

Two days afterward I was leaving the dining-room when I saw Miss Antoinette Massy coming toward me. My heart begun to beat. She was so beautiful and dressed like a dream. She's always seemed to me somebody far off, and different—like somebody that had died and been born again from the way I was.

"You're Cosma Wakely, aren't you?" she said. "My brother told me about meeting you." I couldn't think of a thing to say. I just kept thinking how the lace of her waist looked as if it hadn't ever been worn before; and I noticed her pretty, rosy, shining nails. "I wondered if you wouldn't go for a motor ride with my brother, Gerald, and myself, tomorrow afternoon?"

"Oh," I says, "I could, like anything."

And all that night when I woke up, I kept thinking what was going to happen, and it was in my head like something saying something. It wasn't so much for the ride—it was that they'd been the way they'd been to me. That was it.

I put on my best dress and my best shoes

and my other hat; and when I met Miss Massy in the parlor I see right off that I was dressed up too much. She had on a sweater and a little cap. I always noticed that about me—I dressed up when I'd ought not to, and times when I didn't everybody else was always dressed up.

Her brother came in, and I hadn't sensed before how good-looking he was. If ever he had come to Katytown, Lena Curtsy would have met him before he got half-way from the depot to the post-office.

Up to then, this was my most wonderful school-day. But it wasn't the ride. It was because they were both being to me the way they were.

We stopped at a little road-house for tea. I hated tea, and when they asked me to have tea, I said so. I said I'd select pop. Going back, it was the surprise of my school life that far when Antoinette Massy asked me if I would go home with her at the end of the week.

"Oh," I says, "I can't! I can't!"

## 152 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"Do come," she says; "my brother will run us down. You can take your work with you."

"Oh," I says, "it isn't that. I guess you don't understand"—I thought I ought to tell her just the truth—"I can't act the way you're used to, I'm afraid," I said. "I'm learning—but I had a lot to know."

She laughed, and made me go. I wondered why. But I couldn't help going. I thought of all the mistakes I'd make—but then, I'd learn something, too. "Just be yourself," Miss Antoinette said. And I said, "Myself buttered a whole slice of bread and bit it for a week before I noticed that the rest didn't." And when she said, "Yourself did not. You got that from other people in the first place," I asked her, "Then, what *is* myself?" And she says, "That's what we're at school to find out!"

It was in a big house on the Hudson that the Massys lived. I saw some glass houses for flowers. When the door was opened I saw a lot more flowers and a stained glass window and a big hall fire.

"Oh!" I says. "Can farm-houses be like that?"

"What does she mean?" says Mrs. Massy, and shook hands with me. I wanted to laugh when I looked at her. She was little and thick everywhere, and she had on a good many things, and she looked so anxious! It didn't seem as if there was enough things in all the world to make anybody look so anxious about them.

Dinner was at half past seven. In Katy-town supper is all over by half past six, and at half past seven the post-office is shut. I had a little light cloth dress, and I put that on; and then I just set down and looked around my room. There was a big bed with a kind of a flowered umbrella over it with lace hanging down; and a little low dressing table, all white and glass, and my own bath showed through the open door. And looking around that room and remembering how the house was, I thought:

"Oh, if Mother could have had things fixed up a little, maybe she could have been different

## 154 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

herself. Maybe then she'd have been Mother instead of 'Ma' from the beginning."

In the drawing-room were Mrs. Massy and Mr. Gerald, her looking like a little, fat, bright-colored ball, and him like a man on some stage—better than any man I'd seen in the Katytown opera-house attractions, even. The dining-room was lovely, and the table was like a long wide puzzle. I watched Miss Antoinette, and I done like her, word for word, food for food, tool for tool. They talked more about nothing than anybody I'd ever heard. Mrs. Massy would take the most innocent little remark, and worry it like a terrier, and run off with the pieces, making a new remark of each one. She had things enough around her neck to choke her if they'd all got to going. There were two guests, enormous women with lovely velvet belts for waists. They talked in bursts and gushes and up on their high tiptoes—I can't explain it. It was like another language, all irregular. I just kept still, and ate, and one or two things I couldn't comprehend I didn't take any of. Everything would have

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been all right if only one of the guests hadn't thought of something funny to tell.

"Elwell sounded the horn right in the midst of a group of factory girls to-night," she said. "We were in a tearing hurry and we didn't see them. And one of them stood still, right in the road, and she said, 'You go round me.' Why, she might have been killed! and then we should have been arrested. Elwell had all he could do to swing the car."

All of a sudden come to me the picture of those girls—the girls I knew, tracking home at night, dog-tired, dead-tired, from ten hours on their feet and going home to what they was going home to. I saw 'em with my heart—Rose and all the rest that I knew and that I didn't know. And the table I was to, and the lights and the glass, blurred off. Something in my head did something. I had just sense enough not to say anything, for I knew I couldn't say enough, or say it right so's I could make it mean anything. But I shoved back my chair, and I walked out the door.

In the hall I ran. I got the front door open,

and I got out on the porch. I wanted to be away from there. What right did I have to be there, anyhow? And while I stood there with the wind biting down on me, all of a sudden it wasn't only Rose and Nettie and the girls I saw, but it was Mother, too—Mother when I'd used to call her "Ma."

Mr. Gerald was by me in a minute.

"Miss Cosma," he said, "what is it?"

"He took my arm—in that wonderful, taking-care way that is so dear in a man, when it is—and he drew me back into the vestibule.

"If she speaks like that about those girls again," I said, "I'll throw my glass of water at her."

I hated him for what he said. What he said was:

"By jove! You are magnificent!"

It took all the strength out of me. "None of you see it," I said. "I don't know what I'm here for. I don't belong here. I belong out there in the road with those girls that the car plowed through."

"I don't know about that," he said. "Why



don't you stay here and teach me something about them? I don't even know what you mean."

He put me in a chair by the fire, and they sent me some coffee there. I heard him explaining that I felt a little faint. I wanted to yell, "It's a lie." I knew, then, that I was a savage—all the pretty little smooth things they used to cover up with, I wanted to rip up and throw at all of them.

"I hate it here," I thought. "I hate the factory. I hate home. I hate Luke. . . ."

That was nearly everything that I knew; and I hated them all. Was it me that everything was wrong with, I wondered? I was looking down at Mr. Gerald's hands that had moved so dainty and used-to-things all the while he was eating. That made me think of Mr. Ember's hands when he was eating that morning at Joe's. These folks all did things like Mr. Ember. And I'd got to stay there till I knew how to do them, too. But from that minute I began to wonder why folks that can do things so dainty don't always live up to it

## 158 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

in other ways, like it seemed to me he did. And then I got to thinking about his patience with me, so by the time the rest came in from the dining-room I was all still again.

When the guests had gone I was standing by some long curtains when Miss Antoinette walked over to me. "You lovely thing," she said. "By that rose curtain you are stunning. Stand still, dear. Gerald, look."

But I didn't think much about him; and my eyes brimmed up.

"You called me 'dear,'" I says. "You're about the first one."

She put her arm around me, and then it come out. Her brother had one wing of the ground floor all to himself. It was a studio. He painted. And he wanted to paint me. There was only one thing I thought about.

"I'll be glad to do that," I says, "if you'll both teach me some of the things you see I don't know—talking, eating, everything."

The way they hesitated was so nice for my feelings it was like having my first lesson then.

I went down there the whole spring. And

there, and to the school, little by little I learned things. I knew it—I could almost feel it. I didn't always know what I'd learned, but I knew that it was changing me. I don't know any better feeling. It's more fun than making a garden. It's more fun than watching puppies grow. It was almost as much fun as writing my book. And back of it all was the great big sense, shining and shining, that I was getting more the way I wanted to be, that I *had* to be, if ever I was to see *him* again. John Ember was in my life all the time, like somebody saying something.

Pretty soon Miss Antoinette's maid put my hair up a different way. And Miss Antoinette had a nice gown of hers altered for me. I'll never forget the night I first put on that lace dress. We'd motored out as usual, on a Friday in May, when I'd been going there most three months. They were going to have a few people for dinner. I'd had a peep at the table, that looked like a banquet, and I thought: "Not a thing on it, Cosma Wakely, that you don't know how to use right. Wouldn't Katytown

stick out its eyes?" And when Miss Antoinette's maid put the dress on me, I most jumped. I wouldn't have believed it was me.

I remember I come out of my room, loving the way the lace felt all around me. The hall was lighted bright down-stairs, and, beyond, some folks were just coming into the vestibule, in lovely colored cloaks. And all of a sudden I thought:

"Oh—living is something different from what I always thought! And I must be one of the ones that's intended to know about it!"

It was a wonderful, grand feeling; and it was surprising what confidence it gave me. At the foot of the stairs, one of the maids knocked against me with a big branched candlestick she was carrying.

"You should be more careful!" I says to her, sharp. And I couldn't help feeling like a great lady when she apologized, scared.

In the drawing-room the first person I walked into was Mr. Gerald. I'd been seeing him almost every week—usually he and Miss

Antoinette drove me down on Friday nights. But I'd never seen him quite like this.

"By jove! By jove!" he said, and bowed over my hand just the way I'd seen him do to other women. "Oh, Cosma!"

He'd never called me that before. I liked his saying it, and saying it that way. When I went to meet the rest, and knew he was watching me and that he liked the way I looked—instead of being embarrassed I thought it was fun.

And when it was Mr. Gerald that took me down, and we all went into that beautiful room, and to the dinner table that I wasn't afraid of—I can't explain it, but everything I'd ever done before seemed a long way off and I didn't want to bother remembering.

It was a happy two hours. After a while I began to want to say little things, and I found I could say them so nobody looked surprised, or glanced at anybody else after I had spoken. That was a wonderful thing, when I first noticed that they didn't glance at each other when

I said anything. I saw I could say the truth right out, if I only laughed about it a little bit, and they'd call it "quaint," and laugh too, instead of thinking I was "bad form." There was quite an old man on my right, and I liked that. I always got along better with them than the middle ones that wanted to talk about themselves.

Just as soon as the men came up-stairs, Mr. Gerald came where I was. He wanted me to go down the rooms to see a "Chartron." I thought it was some kind of furniture; but when I got there it was a picture of Miss Antoinette, and we sat down with our backs to it.

"How are you?" Mr. Gerald said—his voice was kind of like he kept boxes of them and opened one special for you. "Tell me about yourself."

"I feel," I said, "as if I'd been sitting on the edge of things all my life, and I'd just jumped over in. It's a pity you never were born again. You can't tell how it feels."

"Yes, I was," he said, "I've been born again."

"Well, didn't it make you want to forget everything that had happened to you before?" I said.

"It does," said Mr. Gerald; "and I have. You know, don't you, that I count time now from the day I met you?"

"Great guns!" I said.

It took me off my feet so that I didn't remember to say "My word," like they'd told me. I sat and stared at him.

He laughed at me. "You wonder!" he said. "They'll never spoil you, after all. Cosma,— couldn't you? Couldn't you?"

"Why, Mr. Gerald," I says, "I'd as soon think of loving the president."

"Don't bother about him," he says. "Love me."

Some more folks came in then to see the Chartron, and I never saw him any more that night till they were leaving. Then he told me Miss Antoinette was going back on Sunday, but he'd run me in town on Monday morning, if I'd go. I said I'd go.

It was raining that Monday morning, and

everything smelled sort of old-fashioned and nice, and the rain beat in our faces.

"Cosma," he said, "don't keep me waiting."

"Why not?" I said. I can see just the way the road went stretching in front of us. I looked at it, and I thought *why not, why not*. . . . I'd been saved from Katytown. I'd been saved from Luke, from Mr. Carney, from the factory. I'd been given my school, and now this chance. *Why not?*

"Because I love you so much that it isn't fair to me," he said.

And he thought he was answering what I had said, but instead he was really answering what I had thought.

"You like your new life, don't you?" he said. "Why not have it all the time, then? And if you love me, even a little, I can make you happy—I know I can."

"And could I make you happy?" I said.

"Gad!" said Mr. Gerald.

The road was empty in the soft beating rain. With the slow and perfectly sure way he did



everything he ran the car to the curb and turned to me.

"Cosma," he said.

I looked at him. Just a word of mine, and my whole life would be settled, to be lived with him, and with all that I began to suspect I was meant to have. I kept looking at him. I felt a good deal the way I had felt when I looked at a long-distance telephone and knew, with a word, I could talk a thousand miles. And I didn't feel much more.

He took me in his arms and drew my wet face close to his, that was warm, as his lips were warm.

"I want you for my wife," he said.

It seemed so wonderful that he should love me that I thought mostly about that, and not about whether I loved him at all. I sat still and said:

"I don't see how you can love me. There's so much I've got to learn yet, before I'm like the ones you know."

"You're adorable," he said; "you're glori-

ous. I love you. I want you with me always.  
. . . Cosma! Say maybe. Say just that!"

So then I did the thing so many girls had  
done before me and will do after me:

"Well, then," I said, "maybe."

He frightened me, he was so glad. I felt left  
out. I wished that I was glad like that.

But it was surprising how much more confidence I had in myself after I knew that a  
man like Mr. Gerald loved me.

"That's because," I said to me, "women have  
counted only when men have loved them."

And I thought that had ought to be different.

## CHAPTER IX

ONE day toward spring I went down to see Mrs. Bingy. She had three women in her room every day, making the lace. She had regular customers from the shops. When I went in she was in a good black dress and was sitting holding the baby, that was beginning now to talk.

"Oh, Cossy," she says, "look what I got," and pointed to some papers.

"Katytown papers," I said. "I don't suppose there's a soul there outside the family that I care whether I ever see again or not."

"Why, Cossy," she said, "there's Lena—"

"Lena Curtsy!" I said. "Good heavens! Mrs. Bingy, I wish you wouldn't call me 'Cossy.'"

"I always do forget the Cosma," she said humbly; "I'll try to remember better. But Lena Curtsy—Cossy, she's married to Luke."

"Good for them," I said; "and I suppose

they had a charivari that woke the cemetery. That's Katytown."

"They've gone to housekeeping to Luke's father's," said Mrs. Bingy. "Don't you want to read about it, Cossy—Cosma?"

I took the paper. "Mrs. Bingy," I said, "I came down to show you my new dress."

"It's a beauty," she said. "I noticed it first thing when I see you. It must be all-silk." She examined it with careful fingers. "I made this of mine myself," she added, proud.

"Do you know anything about Keddie?" I asked her.

She begun to cry. "That's all that's the matter," she says. "The first money I earned I sent him enough to go and take the cure. The letter come back to me, marked that they couldn't find him. So I took the baby and run down to Katytown, and, sure enough, the house was rented to strangers and not a stick of furniture left in it. He'd sold it all off and went West. And me with the money to give him the cure, when it's too late. I ought," she says, "never to have left him."

"Mrs. Bingy," I says, "do you honestly believe that?"

"No," says she, "I don't. But it's a terrible thing to own up to. I saw your Ma in Katytown."

"Oh!" I says. "How is she? She don't write. She just wrote once and put in a dollar chicken money."

"They think you'll be back yet," Mrs. Bingy says. "Your Pa says, 'Her place is here to home with her Ma. Her Ma's getting along in years now, and she needs her to home, and she'd ought to come back.'"

"Why don't the boys come back?" I says.

"Oh, they're working," Mrs. Bingy says, surprised.

"So am I," I says. "Mrs. Bingy! Do you think I ought to go back?"

She leaned forward and spoke it behind her hand.

"No," she says, "I don't. But it's a terrible thing to own up to."

I went back to the school that Monday morning, wondering why it seems hard to own up

## 170 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

to so many things that's true. If they're true, the least you can do is to own up to them, ain't it?

It was some time before this that I'd made up my mind to try for the Savage Prize. The Savage Prize was open to the whole school, and it was for the best oration given at a contest the week before commencement. I was pretty good at what I called speaking pieces, and what they called "vocational expression." And I had some things in my head that I wanted to write about. I'd decided to write on "Growing," and I meant by that just getting different from what you were, that my head was so full of. I had a good deal to say, beginning with that white god that I knew all about now. But Rose Everly didn't know. And I wondered why.

One day the principal called me in her office.

"Miss Spot has showed me the rough draft of your oration," she said. "It is admirable, Cosma. But I should not emphasize unduly the painful fact that there are many to whom

growth is denied. Dwell on the inspiring features of the subject. Let it bring out chiefly sweetness and light."

"But—" I says.

"That will do, Cosma. Thank you," said the principal.

While I was working on the Savage Prize oration, trying to make it "all sweetness and light," Antoinette sent me a note, in history class.

"Jolly larks!" she said, "Friday. Dinner at the Dudleys' studio. Opera in the Dudleys' box. Our house for Sunday. Look your best. Baddy Dudley is back—You remember about him?"

Mr. Gerald had been promising to take us to the Dudleys' studio. Mr. Dudley's brother, "Baddy," spending that winter in Italy, had had a kodak picture of Antoinette and me and had sent me messages through Gerald.

On the night of the party I was dressing in my room at the school when a maid came up with a message. A girl was down-stairs to see me. My lace gown and a white cloak that

Antoinette had loaned me were spread on the bed. I was just finishing my hair and tying in it a gold rose of Antoinette's when my visitor came in. It was Rose Everly.

I'll never forget how Rose looked. She had on a little tight brown jacket and a woolen cap. Her skirt was wet and her boots were muddy. She stood winking in the light, and panting a little.

"My!" she said, "you live high up, don't you?" Then she stood staring at me. "Cosma," she said, "how beautiful!"

She dropped into a chair. In that first thing she said she had been the old Rose. Then she got still and shy, and sat openly looking at my clothes. She was not more than twenty-one, and the factory life had not told on her too much. Yet some of the life seemed to have gone out of her. She talked as if not all of her was there. She sat quietly and she looked as if she were resting all over. But her eyes were bright and interested as she looked at my dress.

I said, "People have been good to me, Rose. They gave me these."

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"You're different, too," she said, looking hard at me. "You talk different, too. Oh, dear. I bet you won't do it!"

"Tell me what it is," I said, and put the lace dress over my head.

"It's the first meeting since the fire," Rose said. "I wanted you there."

I asked her what fire, and her eyes got big.

"Didn't you know," she said, "about the fire in our factory? Didn't you know the doors were locked again, and five of us burned alive?"

I hadn't known. That seemed to me so awful. There I was, fed and clothed and not worrying about rent, and here this thing had happened, and I nor none of us hadn't even heard of it. Miss Manners and Miss Spot didn't like us to read the newspapers too much.

"It broke out in the pressroom," Rose said. "That girl that was feeding your old press—they never even found her."

"Oh, Rose," I said. "Rose, Rose!" And when I could I asked her what it was that she had come wanting me to do.

## 174 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

She made a little tired motion. "It ain't only the fire," she said. "Things have got worse with us. We've got three times the fines. Since they've stopped locking the doors, they make us be searched every night, and the new forewoman—she's fierce. And we can't get the girls interested. They say it ain't no use to try. We want to try to have one more meeting to show 'em there is some use. And we thought, mebbe—we knew you could make 'em see, Cosma. If you'd come and talk to 'em."

"When would it be?" I asked her.

"They've called the meeting for to-morrow night," she told me.

"To-morrow!" I said. "Oh, Rose—no, then I can't. I'm going out of town to-night, for two days, up the Hudson. . . ."

I stopped. She got up and came to fasten my sash for me.

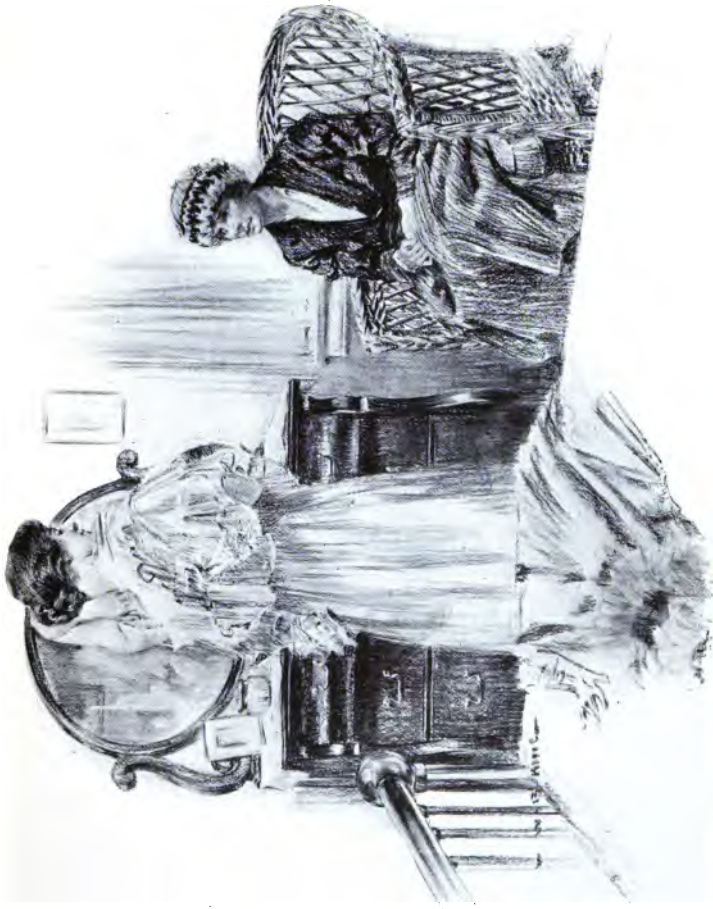
"I thought mebbe you couldn't," she said; "but it was worth trying."

"Have it next week," I said. "Have the meeting then."

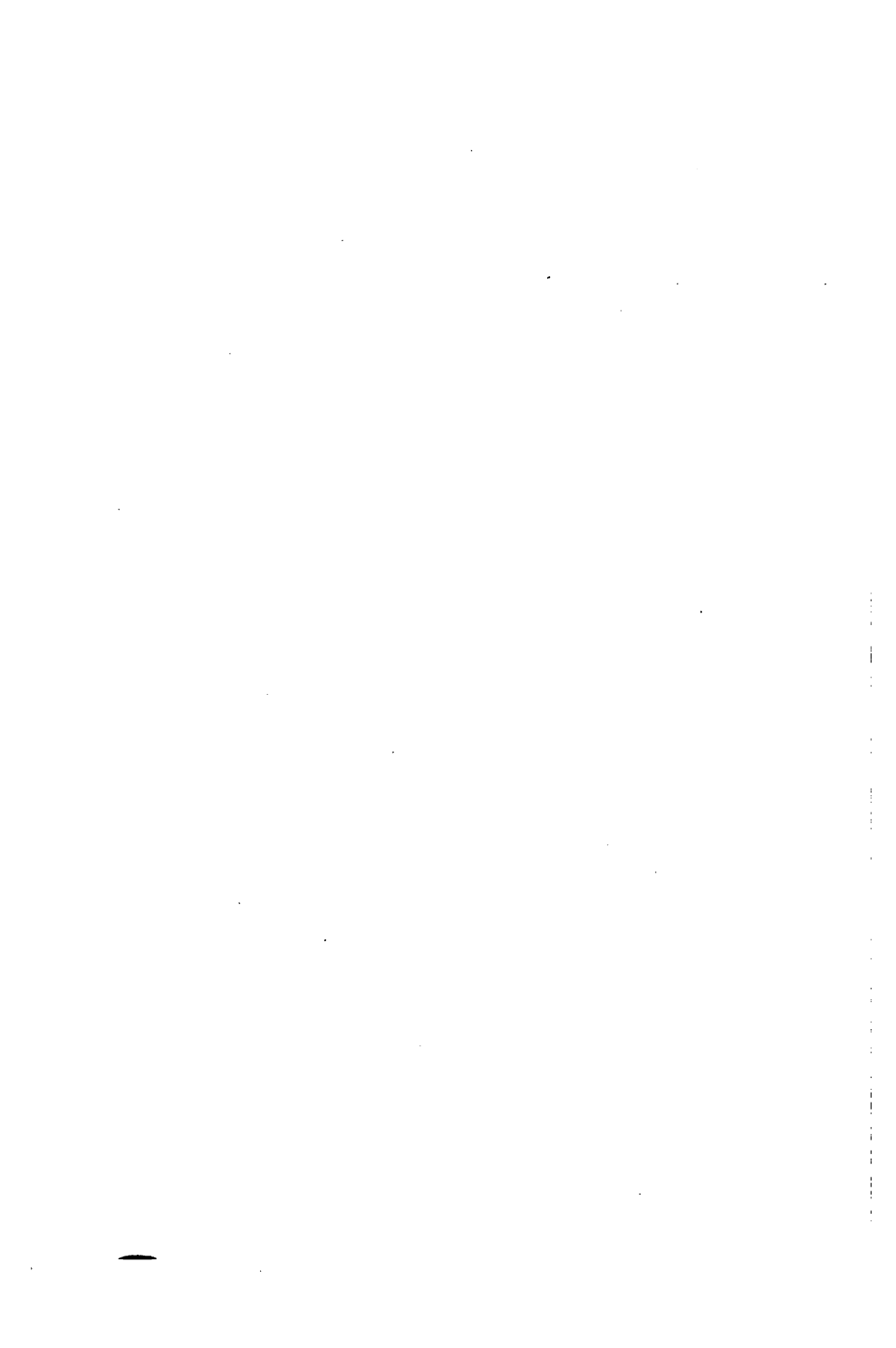
But they had postponed once—some one,

MORNING

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"Didn't you know about the fire in our factory?"



Rose said, had "peached" to the forewoman. For to-morrow night the men had loaned them a hall. She bent to my sash. I could see her in my glass. I was ashamed.

She told me what had come to the girls—marriage, promotion, disgrace. Two of them had disappeared.

"I'm so sorry," I kept on saying. Then the maid came to tell me the motor was there. I put on my cloak with the fur and the bright lining. It had made me feel magnificent and happy. With Rose there, I felt all different.

She slipped away and went out in the dark. The light was on in the limousine. Mr. Gerald came running up the steps for me. Antoinette was there already. I went down and got in. There was nothing else to do.

The drive curved back around the dormitory, and so to the street again. As we came out on the roadway, we passed Rose, walking.

I thought: "She's walking till the street-car comes." But I knew it was far more likely that she was walking all the way to her room.

At the Dudleys' studio I forgot Rose for a

little while. It was a great dark room with bright colors and dim lamps. Mrs. Dudley had on a dress of leopard skins, with a pointed crown on her head. There were twenty or more there, and among them "Baddy" Dudley. From the minute I came in the room he came and sat beside me. He was big and ugly, but there was something about him that made you forget all the other men in the room.

It was a wonderful dinner. When coffee came, the lights flashed up, a curtain was lifted, and Mrs. Dudley danced. The lights rose and fell as she danced, and with them the music. Every one broke into a low humming with the music. Then she sank down, and the lights went out, and we sat in the dark until she came back to dance again. "I shall never be happy," said Mr. Dudley as we sat so, "until I see you dance, in a costume which I shall design for you."

"Will you dance with me?" I asked him. That was the most fun—that I could think of things to say, just the way Lena Curtsy used

to—only now they were never the kind that made anybody look shocked.

“Make the appointment in the Fiji Islands or in Fez,” he said; “and there I will be.”

Mr. Gerald came and sat down beside me.

“Oh, very well, Massy—to the knife,” says Mr. Dudley.

It was half after nine when we left for the opera. The second act had begun, which seemed to me a wicked waste of tickets. But even then Mr. Gerald had no intention of listening. He sat beside me and talked.

“Cosma,” he said, “I’m about ten times as miserable as usual to-night. Can’t you say something.”

I said, “Tell me: Is that what they call a minor? Because I want those for my heaven.”

“I want you for my heaven,” Mr. Gerald observed. “Dear, I’m terribly in earnest. Don’t make me run a race with that bally ass.”

“Don’t race,” I said. “Listen.”

“I am listening,” said Gerald, “to hear what you will say.”

## 178 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

All at once it flashed over me: Cosma Wakely, from a farm near Katytown! Here I was, loving my new life and longing to keep it up.

"You're right where you belong," he went on, "looking just as you look now. But you do need me, you know, to complete the picture."

It was true. I did belong where I was. By a miracle I had got there. Why was I hesitating to stay? If it had been Lena Curtsy, or Rose, I couldn't imagine them feeling as if all this belonged to them. It was true. There must be these distinctions. Why should I not accept what had come? And then help the girls—help Father and Mother. Think of the good I could do as Gerald's wife. . . .

The music died, just like something alive. The curtain went down. And in the midst of all the applause, and the silly bowing on the stage, and the chatter in the box, I looked in the box next to ours. And there sat John Ember.



## CHAPTER X

**H**E was sitting very near me, leaning his arm on the velvet rail which divided the boxes. He was looking at the stage. Two young girls and a very beautiful woman, beautifully dressed, were with him. Save for his formal dress, he looked exactly as he looked when I had said good-by to him in Twiney's pasture.

I was terrified for fear he should turn and look at me. I longed, as I had never longed for anything, to have him turn and look. I shrank back lest I should find that I must speak to him. I was wild with the wish to lean and speak his name. What if he had forgotten? Not until I caught the lift of his brow as he turned, the line of his chin, the touch of his hand, already familiar, to his forehead, did I know how well I had remembered. And then, abruptly, I was shot through with a sweetness and a pride: The time had come! I could meet him as I had dreamed of meet-

ing him, speak to him as I had hoped sometime to speak to him, as some one a little within his world. . . .

"The bally trouble with opera—" Gerald was beginning.

"Please, please!" I said. "You talked right through that act, Gerald. Let me sit still now!"

Mr. Ember, his face turned somewhat toward the house, was talking to the woman beside him.

" . . . the new day," he said. "Such a place as this gives one hope. For all the folly of it, some do care. Here is music—a good deal segregated, in a place apart, for folk to come and participate. And they come—by jove, you know, they come!"

The woman said something which I did not hear.

"Not as pure an example as a symphony concert," he said, "no. There they demand nothing—no accessories, no deception, no laughter—even no story! That is music, pure and undefiled, and, it seems to me, really socialized.

There participation is complete, with no interventions. I tell you we're coming on! Any day now, the drama may do the same thing!"

He listened to the woman again, and nodded, without looking at her. That made me think of a new wonder—of what it would be to have him understand one like that.

"Ah, yes," he said, "there's the heartbreak. God knows how long it will be before these things will be for more than the few. This whole thing,"—his arm went out toward the house—"and us with it, are sitting on the chests of the rest of them. And that isn't so bad, bad as it is. The worst is that we don't even know it."

"But what is one to do?" she cried—her voice was so eager that I caught some of what she said. "What can one do?"

"Find your corner and dig like a devil," he said. "I suppose I should say go at it like a god. Only we don't seem to know how to do that—yet."

He sat silent for a minute, looking over the house.

"We don't even half know that the other fellow is here," he said. "The isolation in audiences is frightful. Look at us now—we don't even guess we're all on the same job." He laughed. "We need to unionize!"

Some one else came to their box and joined them. He rose, moved away, talked with them all. Then he came to his place again, very near me, and sat silent while the others talked. I could see his head against the velvet stage curtain, and his fine clear profile. But now it was as if I were looking at him down a measureless distance.

I looked down at my yellow dress and my yellow slippers, at my hands that were manicured under my long gloves. I thought of the things they had taught me, about moving and speaking and eating. I thought how proud I was that I had made myself different. And to-night, when I first saw him in that box, it was as if I had come running to him, like a little child with a few bangles—and I had thought I could meet him now, almost like an equal.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 183

And I saw now that the girl who had sat there outside the Katytown inn and had eaten her peaches, and had tried to flirt with him, wasn't much farther away from him—not much farther away—than I was, there in the opera box in my yellow dress, with a year of school behind me. And my only chance to help in all this that he understood and lived was to go with Rose; and I had let that slip, so that I could come here and show off how well I looked, with my words—and my hair—done different.

The place where he lived every day of his life was a place that I had never gone in or guessed or dreamed could be. He was living for some other reason than I had ever found out about. And I had thought that I was almost ready to see him *now*!

As far as I could, I drew back toward the partition, out of his possible sight. But I heard the last act as I had never heard music before—because I heard it as he was hearing it, as we all over the house might have been listening to it. I listened with him. And all

## 184 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

the anguish and striving in the world were in the music and the music's way of trying to make this clear. It said it so plain that I wondered all of us didn't stand up in our places and "go at it like gods."

Before the curtain, and in the high moment of the act, they came for us. Mrs. Dudley liked to go down and give her carriage number early, especially when a supper was on. So we went, and I left him there. I saw him last against the crude setting of a prison, with the music remembering back to what it had been saying long before.

## CHAPTER XI

**T**HERE is nothing more wonderful in the world than the minute when all that you have always been seeing begins to look like something else. It happened to me when I sat down at our table at the Ritz-Carlton, a table which had been reserved for us and was set with orchids and had four waiters, like moons.

I sat between Gerald and Mr. Baddy Dudley.

I looked up at Gerald, and I thought, "You're very kind. I owe you a great deal. But is *this* the way you are? Were you like this all the time?"

Then I looked up at Mr. Baddy Dudley. I wanted to say to him: "Ugh! You're all locked up in your body, and you can't drop it away. Why didn't you tell me?"

Across the table was Mrs. Dudley, in flesh-pink and pearls. I thought of her dancing, in

the leopard skin and the pointed crown; and it seemed to me that she was dead, a long time ago, and here she was, and she didn't dream it herself.

Here and there were the others; they seemed to fill the table with their high voices and their tip-top speech and their strong, big white shoulders. They were so kind—but I wondered if otherwise they had ever been born at all, and what made them think that they had?

Of them all, Antoinette was the best, because she was just sketched—yet. She could rub herself out and do it nearly all over again; and something about her looked anxious and hopeful, and as if it was waiting to see if that wasn't what she would do.

Then I tried to look myself in the face. And it seemed to me as if I didn't find any of me there at all.

I ate what they brought me; I answered what they said to me. But all the time they were all as far off as the other tables of folk, and the waiters, whom I didn't know at all.



And all the while I looked around the big white room, and up at the oval of the ceiling, and—"This whole thing, and us with it, is sitting on the chests of the rest of them," I thought. I wondered about Rose. If she walked, she must have got home about the time I got to the opera. Rose! She was real, and she was awake. She had come all that way to get me to help her to wake the rest. Was that what he meant by digging like a devil?

When we left the hotel, toward two o'clock, there was nothing to do but to motor on with the rest. When we reached the Massys', the time was already still, because it expected morning. The Dudleys and Mr. Baddy Dudley had come up with us. When at last I got the window open in my room, I was in time to see a little lift of gray in the sky beyond the line of trees on the terrace.

"The new day," I said. "The new day. Cosma Wakely, have you got enough backbone in you to stand up to it?"

It was surprising how little backbone it took

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## 188 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

the next afternoon. What I had to do was what I wanted to do. All the forenoon, no one was stirring. It was eleven before coffee came to our rooms. I had heard Mr. Dudley calling a dog somewhere about, so I had kept to my room for fear of meeting him. At one o'clock there were guests for luncheon. When they started back to town I told Antoinette that I wanted to go with them. I meant to get to Rose's meeting.

"Nonsense!" she said. "Have you forgotten dinner? And the dancing?"

I said that I was worried about my examinations, and that I wanted to get back. When I first came to the Massys' I would have told them the truth.

The long ride down was like a still hand laid on something beating. I liked being alone as much as once I had dreaded it.

We had been late in setting off. It was almost six o'clock when I reached the school. When I had eaten and dressed and was on my way to the hall, it was already long past the time that Rose had named for the meeting.

All the girls were in their seats. There were only Rose and one or two more on the platform. The hall was low and smoky. The girls were nervous about the doors, and questioned everybody that come in. The girl at the door began to question me when I went in, but Rose saw me.

"Let her come in," she called out. "She's our next speaker!"

And when I heard the ring in her voice, and saw her face and felt her hand close on mine, and knew how glad she was that I had come, I was happy. Happier than I had ever once been at the Massys'.

I went right up on the platform. And my head and my heart had never been so full of things to say. And the girls listened.

Did you ever face a roomful of girls who work in a factory? Any factory? But especially in a factory where, instead of treating them like one side of the business, the owners treat them like necessary evils? You wouldn't ever have supposed that the heads of the Carney factory were dependent the least bit on the

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girls who did the work for them. You'd have thought that it was just money and machinery and the buildings that did the work, and that the girls were being let work for a kindness. I never could understand it. When the business needed more money, the owners gave it to it. When the machinery needed oil or repairs or new parts, it got them. When the buildings had to have improvements, they got them. But when the girls needed more light or air or wages or shorter hours or a cleaner place to be, or better safety, they just got laughed at and rowed at and told to learn their places, or not told anything at all. And more girls come, younger, fresher, that didn't need things.

"If I was only my machine," I had heard Rose say that night, "I'd have plenty of oil and wool and the right shuttles. But I'm nothing but the operator, and the machine has the best care. And if there comes a fire—the *machinery is insured*. But we ain't."

I have not much remembrance of what I said to the girls that night. There must have been a hundred of them in the hall. And I know

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that as I stood there, looking into their faces, knowing them as I knew them, with their striving for a life like other folks, there—suddenly ringed round them—I saw the double tier of boxes of the night before, and I heard his voice:

“ . . . This whole place here, and we with them, are on the chests of the others.”

I had no bitterness. But I had the extreme of consciousness that I had ever reached—not of myself, but of all of us, and of the need of helping on our common growth. They were to stand together, inviolably together, for the fostering of that growth, I told them. An injury to one was an injury to them all—because they were together. And the employers of whom they made their demands were no enemies, but victims, too, who must be helped to see, by us who happen to have had the good fortune to be able to see the need first.

I remember how I ended. I heard myself saying it as if it were some one else speaking:

“I’m with you. You must let me plan with

you. But I can't plan with a few of you, when the rest don't care. I want you all."

When the evening was over, and I had found those I knew and met those whom I didn't know, and had set down my name with the list that grew before the door, made up of those who were willing "not to fight, but to help," I stood for a minute in the lower hallway with Rose.

"Oh, Cosma," she said, "I've got to tell you something. I done you dead wrong. I thought last night that you'd gone over—that you didn't care any more."

"I didn't," I said. "It *had* got me—the thing that gets folks."

Next day I rehearsed my oration for the Savage Prize contest. When I'd finished, Miss Spot told me that I needn't practise it any more before her—just to say it over in my room through the three days until the contest was to take place.

"You deliver it as well as I could myself, Cosma," she said.

So I walked back to my room, tore up my

oration, and set to work to write another. My head and my heart were full of what that other was to be. I had been beating and pricking with it all night long after the meeting.

Savage Prize Day was a great day at the school. We were given engraved invitations to send out. I sent mine to Mrs. Bingy and Rose and the girls in the factory. I knew they couldn't come; but I knew, too, they'd like getting something engraved. Only it happened that not only Mrs. Bingy came—Rose and the girls came, too. Handed to them with their pay envelope had been the notice to quit. Somebody had told the superintendent about that meeting. Six of the leaders were let out. I saw them all sitting there when I got up on the platform. And they gave me strength, there in all that lot of well-dressed, soft-voiced folks. They were dear people, too. Only they were dear, different. And they didn't understand anything whatever about life, the way Mrs. Bingy and Rose and I did. And that wasn't those folks' fault either. But they seemed to take credit for it.

## 194 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Antoinette had an oration. Hers was on "Our Boat Is Launched; But Where's the Shore?" It told about how to do. It said everybody should be successful with hard work. It said that industry is the best policy and bound to win. It said that America is the land where all who will only work hard enough may have any position they like. It said that everything is possible. Everybody enjoyed Antoinette's oration. She had some lovely roses and violets, and all her relatives sat looking so pleased. Her father had promised her a diamond pendant, if she got the prize.

There was another on "Evolution." She said we should be patient and not hurry things, because short-cuts wasn't evolution. I wondered what made her take it for granted God is so slow. But I liked the way her bracelets tinkled when she raised her arm, and I think she did, too.

Then it was my turn. I hadn't said anything to Miss Spot about changing my oration. I thought if I could do it once to please them, I could do it again. I worked hard on mine,



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 195

because the prize was a hundred dollars; and if Mrs. Carney wouldn't take it, I wanted it for Rose and the girls. I thought Miss Spot would be pleased to think I did it without any rehearsing. I imagined how she would tell visitors about it, during ice-cream.

I didn't keep a copy of it, but some of it was like this:

I decided to write about "Growing," because I think that growing is the most important thing in the world. I believe that this is what we are for. But some ways to grow aren't so important as others.

For example, I was born on a farm near a little town. At first my body grew, but not my mind. Only through district school. Then it stopped and waited for something to happen—going away, getting married, et cetera. Soon I met somebody who showed me that my mind must keep on growing.

It seems queer, but nobody had ever said anything to me about growing. All that they said to me was about "behaving." And especially about doing as I was told.

Then I came to the city and I worked in a factory. Right away I found out that there the last thing they thought about was anybody growing. They thought chiefly about hurrying.

## 196 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Not a word was ever said about growing. And yet, I suppose, all the time that was our chief business.

One day I went to the Museum, and I saw a large white statue of Apollo Belvedere. The other people there seemed to know about him. I didn't know about him, or any of the rest of the things; and I went outside and cried. How was I to get to know, when nobody ever said anything to me about him? Or about any of the things I didn't know. I wasn't with people who knew things I didn't know. Or who knew anything about growing.

Then I came to this school. I've been here and I've learned a great deal. Countries and capitals and what is shipped and how high the mountains are, and how to act and speak and eat. I know that you have to have all these. But I am writing about some education that shows you how to be on account of what life is. And about how to arrange education so that every one can have it, and not some of us girls have it, and some of us not have anything but the machines. . . .

I hadn't meant to say much about this. But all of a sudden, while I stood there speaking to that dressed-up roomful, with all the girls down in front soft and white, and taken care

of and promised diamond pendants, it come over me—the difference between them and Rose and the girls there on the back seats. And before I knew I was going to, I began to get outside my oration as I planned it, and to talk about those girls, and about where did their chance come in. . . . And I finished by begging these girls here, that had every chance to grow, to do something for the other girls that didn't have a chance to grow and never would have a chance.

"I don't know why you have it and why they don't," I said. "Maybe when we grow up and get out in the world we'll understand that better. But it can't be right the way it is. And can't we help them?"

Some clapped their hands when I was done. There was another oration on "Success," and one on "Opportunity," and then came the judges' decision.

It was a big disappointment. I thought the other orations were so wishy-washy, it didn't seem possible mine could have been any more

so. But it must have been, because only one of the judges voted for me. He said something about "not so much subject matter as originality of thought." The other two judges voted for Antoinette. That night, by special delivery, she got her diamond pendant.

Rose wrote a note on the back of her program. "Oh, Cosma, this is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to the girls. I never knew anybody else ever heard about us or cared about us. We'll never forget."

When I got back to the dormitory, somebody was waiting for me in the reception-room, and it was Gerald. He drew me over to a window, talking all the way.

"Cosma," he said, "by jove, I never heard anything like that. I say—how did you ever get them to let you do it? . . . They'd never seen it? Rich—*rich!* You sweet dove of an anarchist, you—"

"Don't Gerald," I said.

"Ripping," said he, "simply ripping! I never saw anything so beautiful as you before all that raft. You looked like the well-known angels,

Cosma. And you ought to see my portrait of you now! You dear!"

"Don't, Gerald," I said.

He stared at me. "I say—you aren't taking to heart that miserable hundred dollars! Cosma, dearest! Oh, I'm mad about you . . . this June, . . . this June—"

"Please, please, Gerald," I said. "Don't you see? Those girls there to-day. They're your sort and your people's sort. I'm not that. . . ."

He set himself to explain something to me. I could see it in his sudden attitude. "Look here, Cosma," he said; "don't you understand the joy it would be for a man to have a hand in training the girl he wants to have for his wife?" At that, I looked at him with attention. "Let me be," he went on, "your teacher, lover, husband. Gad, think what it will be to have the shaping of the woman you will make! Can't you understand a man being mad about that?"

I answered him very carefully. "A man, maybe. But not the woman."

"What?" said Gerald blankly.

"I'll make myself," I said. "And then maybe I'll pick out a man who has made himself. And if we love each other, we'll marry."

"But," he said, "the sweetness of having you fit, day after day, into the dream that I have of what you are going to be—"

So then I told him. "Gerald," I said, "I wasn't meant to live your life. I've got to find my job in the world—whatever that is. I've got to get away from you—from you all—from everybody, Gerald!"

"Good heavens!" he said. "Cosma, you're tired—you're nervous—"

I looked at him quite calmly. "If," I said, "when I state some conviction of mine, any man ever tells me again that I'm nervous, I'll tell him he's—he's *drunk*. There's just as much sense in it."

I gave him both my hands. "Gerald," I said, "you dear man, your life isn't my life. I don't want it to be my life. That's all."

Afterward, when I went up-stairs, with that peculiar, heavy lonesomeness that comes from

the withdrawal of this particular interest in this particular way, I wondered if the life I was planning was made up of such withdrawals, such hurts, such vacancies.

And then I remembered the way I had felt when I walked home from the meeting that Sunday night; and it seemed to me there are ways of happiness in the world beside which one can hardly count some of the ways of pleasure that one calls happiness now.

In my room that night I found a parcel. It was roughly wrapped in paper that had been used before. From it fell a white scarf and a paper.

"DEAR COSSY (the letter was written in pencil) I am going to send you this whether you get the prize or whether you don't. If you didn't get it, I guess you need the present worse. It's the nubia I wore on my wedding trip. I sha'n't want it any more. I enclose one dollar and your Pa sends one dollar to get you something with for yourself. With love,  
"MA.

"P. S. My one dollar is egg money, so it's my own it ain't from him I raised them."

## 202 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

Suddenly, as I read, there came over me the first real longing that I had ever had in my life for Katytown, and for home.

One more incident belonged to Savage Prize Oration Day.

Neither Miss Manners nor Miss Spot said anything to me about my oration. But in commencement week Mrs. Carney came in to see me.

"Cosma," she said, "I have a letter here which I must show you."

I read the letter. It said:

"DEAR MRS. CARNEY:

"After due consideration we deem it advisable to inform you that in our judgment the spirit and attitude of Cosma Wakely are not in conformity with the spirit of our school.

"We have ever striven to maintain here an attitude of sweetness and light, and to exclude everything of a nature disturbing to young ladies of immature mind. Cosma is not only opinionated, but her knowledge and experience are out of harmony with the knowledge and experience of our clientèle. We have regretfully concluded to suggest to you, therefore, that she be entered elsewhere to complete her course.



A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 203

"Thanking you, my dear Mrs. Carney, we  
beg to remain,

"Respectfully yours,

"MATILDA MANNERS,

"EMILY SPOT."

## CHAPTER XII

**I** DROP five years—so much in the living, so little in the retrospect!

Upon that time I entered with one thought: The university. At the school I had always been ahead of my class, a meager enough accomplishment there. I had browsed through the books of the third- and fourth-year girls, glad that I found so little that I could not have mastered then. Now, at Mrs. Carney's suggestion and with her help, I took some tutoring; and, what with overwork and summer sessions and entering "special" once more, I made the university, and, toward the close of my fifth year, was nearing my graduation. A part of my expenses I had paid myself. And how did I do that? By making lace for Mrs. Keddie Bingy!

Life is so wonderful that it makes you

afraid, and it makes you glad, and it makes you sure.

In the first year after I left Miss Spot and Miss Manners, I read in one of the papers that John Ember had gone to China on an expedition which was to spend two years in the interior. I wouldn't have believed that the purpose could have dropped so completely out of everything—school, town, life, I myself, became something different. Until then I had not realized how much I had been living in the thought that I was somewhere near him; that any day I might see him in the street, in the cars, anywhere. It was hard to get used to knowing that somebody coming down at the far end of the street could not possibly be he; that no list of names in the paper could have his name.

But just as, that first morning, I knew that he wouldn't want me to give up and cry, so now I knew that I had to go ahead anyway, and do the best I could. It was what he would have wanted. And I had only just begun to make myself different. I had only just shown my-

self how much there was, really, to be different about.

It was wanting to see him so much that made me take out my book again, after a long lapse, and read it over. The first pages were just as I wrote them, on the wrapping-paper that came around the boys' overalls. Then there were the sheets of manila paper that I had bought at the drug store near the first little room that Mrs. Bingy and I took—I remember how I had got up early and walked to the factory one morning to save the nickel for the paper. Then a few pages that I had made at the school on empty theme books; and some more on the Massys' guest paper, gray with lavender lining and a Paris maker's name. Now I went on writing my book with a typewriter that I was learning to use, since a man on Mrs. Bingy's floor let me borrow his machine when he went out in the mornings. My whole history was in those different kinds of paper in my book.

Those typewritten pages are of interest chiefly to myself. They are like the thirty

pages that I threw away because they told only about my going from one factory to another. Only now the typewritten pages were not about events at all, but about the things that went on in me. And those I can sum up in a few words: For the important thing is that in those pages I was recording my growing understanding of something which Rose, out of her sordid living, had done so much to teach me: that my life was not important just because it was the life of Cosma Wakely alone, but it was important in proportion as it saw itself a part of the life about it—the life of school, of working women and men, of all men and women, of all beings. I began to wonder not so much how I could make my own individual “success,” whatever that means, as how I could take my place in the task that we’re all doing together—and of finding out what that task is.

That, in short, is what those years meant to me. The incidents do not so much matter. Nobody gets this understanding in the way that any one else gets it. It is the individual

quest, the individual revelation. Experience, education, love, the mere wear and tear of living, all go toward this understanding. Most of all, love. I think that for me the university and the entire faculty were only auxiliary lights to the light that shone on me, over seas and lands, from the interior of China!

Of all the wonder learned by loving, no wonder is more exquisite than the magic by which one absent becomes a living presence. This man had so established himself before me that it seemed to me I knew his judgments. The simplicity of this new friend of mine, the mental honesty of that one, the accuracy of a third who made me careful of my facts—these John Ember would approve. I always knew. The self-centering or pretense of others; I knew how he would smile at these, shrug at them, but never despise them, because of his tender understanding of all life. Everybody with whom I was thrown who was less developed than I, I understood because I had been Cossy Wakely. Every one who was more developed, I tried passionately to understand.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 209

These, and books, plays, music, "society's" attempt to amuse itself, Rose and the factory, the whole panorama of my life passed every day before the still tribunal of this one man, who knew nothing about them.

The two years' absence of the expedition to China lengthened to three years, and it was well toward the close of the fourth year when Mrs. Carney told me he might be turning home. But the summer and autumn passed, and I heard nothing more. January came, and I was within a few months of graduation.

Then something happened which abruptly tied up the present to my old life.

I came home from class one afternoon to Mrs. Bingy's flat and found on the table a letter for me. It was from Luke, in Katytown.

"DEAR COSSY [the letter said], I hate to ask you to do something, but you're the only one. Lena's gone. . . . She left this letter for me. I send it so you'll know. And she's gone. It says she's in the city. I ain't got the money to go there with. Cossy, could you find her? I thought maybe you could find her. She's got some folks there and I think maybe

## 210 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

she'll go there. It's an awful thing. I hate to ask you but you are the only one please answer.  
LUKE."

The address which he sent me was far uptown, and it took me over to a row of tenements near the East River. It was dark when I left the subway station. And when I found the street at last it smelled worse than the Katytown alleys in summer.

In the doorway of what I thought was the number I was looking for, a man and a woman were standing. I asked if this was the address I wanted, and the woman answered that it was.

"Isn't it Lena?" I said.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"It's Cossy," I answered.

"Yes, I know. What do you want?" she asked again.

I told her that I would wait up-stairs for her, and then the man went away, and she came with me. We climbed the stairs and went along a hall to a parlor that smelled of damp upholstery. She lighted a high central gas-jet that flared without a burner.



She had always been pretty, and she was that now, though her face had lines made by scowling. Her neck and shoulders and breast were almost uncovered, because her waist was so thin and so low-cut. Her little arms were bare from above the elbow, and her little features looked still smaller under a bright irregular turban with a feather like a long sword.

"Luke asked me to find you," I said. "He said he didn't have the money to come himself."

"Poor Luke," said Lena unexpectedly. "He's got the worst of it. But I can't help it."

"You've just come up for a little while, though, haven't you?" I asked her. "And then you're going back?"

She shrugged, and all the bones and cords of her neck and chest stood out. The shadow of her feather kept running over her face, like a knife blade.

"What's the use of your talking like the preacher?" she said. "You got out yourself."

"Yes," I said, "but—"

"You knew before and I didn't know till

## 212 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

after," she added. "That's all. I couldn't stand it, either."

I sat still, wondering what to say.

"We moved in there with his mother and father," Lena said. "His father was good to me; but he was sick and just one more to take care of. His mother—well, I know it was hard for her, but she was bound I should do everything her way. She was a grand good housekeeper—and I ain't. I hate it. She got the rheumatism and sat in her chair all day and told me how. I tell you I couldn't stand it—"

Her voice got shrill, and I thought she was going to cry. But she just threw back her head and looked at me.

"And now in seven months," she said, "something else. That was the last straw. I says now I'd never get out. I've come up here for the last good time I may ever have. If Luke won't take me back, he needn't. I don't care what becomes of me anyway."

"Oh, Lena," I said.

"Don't you go giving yourself airs," she

said. "You got away. We've heard about your school and your smartness. But supposin' you hadn't. Do you think you'd have stayed in Luke's mother's kitchen slavin'?"

"No, Lena," I said. "I honestly don't think I would."

The gas without any burner flickered over the big-figured carpets and chairs and table cover, the mussy paper flowers and the rusty gas stove and the crayon portraits. I almost felt as if I were there in Lena's place.

"I s'pose, though, you're goin' to tell me to go back," she said. "Well, best spare your breath."

It came to me what I had to do, just as simply as things almost always come.

"I'm not going to tell you any such thing," I said. "I wondered if you wouldn't come down and stay with Mrs. Bingy and me while you're here. We've got an extra cot."

She tossed her head. "You're laughing at me," she said.

"No," I said, "I want you. So would Mrs. Bingy."

## 214 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

When she understood, something seemed to go out of her. She shrank down in the chair, and that look of hers went away from her.

"I'd love to," she said. "Oh, Cossy—I thought when I got here things'd be different. But I've been here four days, and I ain't really had any fun here either!"

I told her to get her things ready, and when she went to tell her mother's aunt, with whom she was staying, her aunt came in and made us both have some supper first. The table was in the kitchen, and the aunt was cooking flap-jacks over the stove. Her husband was a tunnel man, and so was his son. There were two girls younger than Lena; one of them was ticket-seller in a motion-picture house, and one of them was "at home."

"Don't you work?" I said to her.

"Hessie's going to be married," said her mother, proud and final.

"Believe me, she'd better get a job instead," said Lena—and I saw the girl who was ticket-seller turn a puzzled face to her, but the bride-to-be laughed. I was glad that I was going to

take Lena away from them. Whatever is to be learned by women, it seems to me that they should never have for teacher a bitter woman, however wise.

Lena had felt a good deal—I could see that; but she knew nothing. To her, her own case was just one isolated case, and due to her bad luck. She had no idea that she was working at a problem, any more than Mrs. Bingy and I had when we left Katytown. Or any more than her mother's aunt, who was thick and flabby and bothered about too much saleratus in the flap-jacks. I thought of the difference between Lena and Rose. They'd got something so different out of a hard life. Rose felt hers for all women; but Lena felt hers for just Lena.

When we got back to the flat, Mrs. Bingy had the gas log burning and she was working at her lace. The child was awake, and playing about. Lena stood in the passage door and looked. We had some plain dark rugs and a few pieces of willow furniture that we had bought on the instalment plan. I had

## 216 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

made some flowered paper shades for the lights. Mrs. Carney had given me one lovely colored print. I had my school-books and some library books on the shelves. And we had a red couch cover Mrs. Bingy had bought—"shut her eyes and bought," she said.

"Oh, ain't it nice?" Lena said.

"Luck sakes," said Mrs. Bingy. "It it ain't Lena-Curtsey-that-was. Well, if here ain't the whole neighborhood!"

I followed Lena into my little bedroom that night.

"Lena," I said, "does Luke know what you told me?"

She shook her head.

"Wouldn't you better write and tell him?" I asked. "And tell him just why you want to get away for a while?"

"He'd think I was crazy," she answered. "They'd talk it over. His ma'd say I was a wicked woman—and I donno but what I am. But I will be crazy if I stay stuck there in that kitchen all those months—"

She began to cry. I understood that the

best thing to do was to let her stay here quietly with us and give her whatever little pleasure we could.

She let me write to Luke and tell him that she was going to visit us for a while. I told her I would take her to a school play the next night, and we looked over her things to decide what she was to wear.

"Lord, Cossy," she said, "it's been months since I've went to bed thinking I was going to have any fun the next day."

Afterward I found Mrs. Bingy sitting with her head on her hand.

"I wonder," she said, "if I done it."

"What, Mrs. Bingy?" I asked.

"When any woman in Katytown leaves her husband, I'll always think that if I hadn't gone, maybe—"

"Mrs. Bingy," I said, "suppose you had stayed. Either he'd have murdered you and the baby, too, maybe, or else you might have had another child or two—with a drunken brute for a father. If you've helped anybody like you to get away, you be glad!"

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"Wouldn't you better write and tell I asked. "And tell him just why you get away for a while?"

"He'd think I was crazy," she answered. "They'd talk it over. I'd say I was a wicked woman. But I will be in the kitchen all day. She began to cry and stood there."



1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

2. Next, gather relevant information and resources. This may include researching existing solutions, consulting with experts, or collecting data.

3. Once the information is gathered, analyze it to identify the key factors and constraints. This step often involves breaking down the problem into smaller, more manageable parts.

4. After analysis, develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This plan should outline the steps to be taken and the resources needed.

5. Implement the plan, making adjustments as necessary based on feedback and changing circumstances. This is the execution phase of the process.

6. Finally, evaluate the results and determine if the problem has been solved or if further action is required. This step involves comparing the actual outcomes with the expected results.



"I don't know what to make of you sometimes, Cossy," she said. "Sometimes what you say sounds so nice I bet it's wicked."

She took the child, gathered him up with a long sweep of her arm and tossed him, with one arm, on her shoulder. She was huge and brown, as she used to be; but now her life had rounded out her gauntness, and she looked fed and rested and peaceful. To see her in the little sitting-room of the flat, busy and happy and cheerful, was like seeing her soul with another body, or her body with another soul, or both. I never got over the wonder of it.

The school play gave Lena nothing of what she pathetically called "fun." And when she went with me to the factory dances, she turned up her nose at the men, not one of whom was, she said, a "dresser." She told me that she hated to be with anybody who knew more than she did. In a fortnight she went back to Luke's aunt to stay, I suspected, as long as her small money held out at the motion-picture shows.

## CHAPTER XIII

**I**T was just before Lena left us that Mrs. Carney telephoned one day for me to come to her house to dinner on the following night. "He's back!" I said to myself as I hung up the receiver; for by now Mrs. Carney had guessed something of John Ember's place in my life, though we had never spoken of it. But he was not back, now, any more than he had been all the other times that I had leaped at the hope, in these three years. It was some one else who had come back.

Mr. Arthur Carney was in Europe that year, and I went there that night without thinking that there was such a person as he in the world, so long had I forgotten his existence. But Mrs. Carney told me that she had had, the day before, a telegram to say that he had landed in New York and would be at home by the end of the week. While we were waiting for din-

ner to be announced, he unexpectedly appeared in her drawing-room. And he said to her, before all those people:

"You see, my dear, I've come to surprise you. I've come to see how well you amuse yourself while I am away."

He said that he would go in to dinner with us just as he was. He was welcomed by everybody, and, of course, Mrs. Carney introduced him to me. She could have had no better answer to what he had just said to her.

"May I present my husband, Miss Wakely?" she said. "Arthur, she was once at the factory. You may remember—" \

He had grown stouter, and his face was pink, and his head was pink through his light hair. He carried a glass and stared at me through it, and then he dropped his glass and said:

"My word, you know. Then we've met before, we two."

"I've never had the pleasure of really meeting you, Mr. Carney," I said.

"You parted from me anyway. I remem-

ber that," he said. And presently he came back to where I was. "Here's my partner, please, madame," he said to Mrs. Carney.

So I sat beside him. Of course I wasn't afraid of him any more and I wasn't really annoyed by him. I could just study him now. And I thought: "If only every girl whom a man follows, as you followed me, could just study him—like a specimen."

"That was a devilish clever trick you played on me, you know," he said, when we were seated. "How'd you come to think of it?"

I said: "That was easy. I could think of it again."

"You could, could you?" said he. "Well, what I want to know is what you're doing here?"

"Mrs. Carney must tell you that," I reminded him.

He stared at me. "You're a cool one," he said. "Come, aren't you going to tell me something about yourself? Why, I must be just about the first friend you had in this little old town."

I had been wondering if I dare say some of all that was in my mind, and I concluded that I did dare—rather than hear all that was in his. So I said:

"Mr. Carney, you have been asking me some questions. Now I wonder if I may ask you some?"

"Sure," he said. "Come ahead. I'd be flattered to get even that much interest out of you."

"It's something I've thought a good deal about," I told him, "and hardly anybody can ever have asked about it, first hand. But you must know, and you could tell me."

"I'll tell you anything you want to know," he said. "Even how much I still think of you."

It was hard to keep my temper, but I did, because I really wanted to know. Every woman must want to know, who's been through it.

"I wish you'd tell me," I said, "just how a man figures everything out for himself, when

he begins to hunt down a girl—as you hunted me?”

He stared again, and then he burst out laughing.

“Bless you,” he said, “he doesn’t figure. He just feels.”

“But now, think,” I urged. “After all, you have brains—”

“Many, many thanks, little one,” he said.

“—and sometimes you must use them. In those days, didn’t you honestly care what became of me? Didn’t you think about that at all?”

“You can bet I did,” he said. “Didn’t I make it fairly clear what I wanted to become of you?”

I wondered whether I could go on. But I felt as if I must—because here was something that is one of the big puzzles of the world.

“But after?” I said. “After?”

He shrugged.

“I wasn’t borrowing trouble, you understand?” he said.

"No," I told him. "No. You were just piling it up for me—that was all. Now see here: In these five years I've had school as I wanted to have then. I know more. I'm better worth while. I'm better able to take my place among human beings. I've begun to grow—as people were meant to grow. Truly—were you willing to take away from me every chance of that—and perhaps to see me thrown on the scrap-heap—just to get what you wanted?"

He looked at me, and then around his table, where his wife's twenty guests were sitting—well-bred, charming folk, all of them.

"My God," he said, "what a funny dinner-table conversation."

"Isn't it?" I agreed. "These things are usually just done—they aren't very often said. But I wish that you could tell me. I should think you'd be interested yourself. Don't you see that we've got a quite unusual chance to run this thing down?"

For the first time I saw in his eyes a look of real intelligence—the sort of intelligence



that he must have used with other men, in business, in politics, in general talk. For the first time he seemed to me not just a male, but a human being.

"Seriously," he said gravely, "I don't suppose that one man in ten thousand ever thinks of what is going to become of the woman. Of course there are the rotters who don't care. Most of them just don't think. I didn't think."

"I'm glad to believe," I said, "that you didn't think. I've wondered about it. But will you tell me one thing more: If men don't think, as you say, why is it that they are so much more likely to hunt down 'unprotected' women, working women, women alone in a city—than those who have families and friends?"

There was something terrible in the question, and in the way that he answered it. He served himself to a delicious ragout that was passed to him, he sipped and savored the wine in his glass, and then he turned back to me:

"They are easier," he said simply, "because

so many of them don't get paid enough to live on. They're glad to help out."

"And yet," I said, "and yet, Mr. Carney, you own a factory where three hundred and fifty of these girls don't get paid enough."

"Oh, well, murder!" he said. "Now you're getting on to something else entirely. We can't do anything to wages. They're fixed altogether by supply and demand—supply and demand. You simply take these things as you find them—that's all."

"You took me to that factory," I reminded him.

"Well," he said, "you were looking for a job, weren't you? Was that three dollars per better than nothing—or wasn't it?"

I kept still. Something was the matter, we seemed to go in a circle. Finally I said:

"Anyway, Mr. Carney, I thank you for answering me. That was a good deal to do."

He sat turning his wine-glass, one hand over his mouth.

"You do make me seem a blackguard," he said, "and yet—on my honor—if you think I

have any—I didn't think I was. I didn't mean anybody any harm. Damn it all, I was just trying to find a little fun."

He looked at me. And all at once, I knew how he must have looked when he was a little boy. I could see the little boy's round eyes and full red cheeks, and the way he must have answered when he'd done something wrong. And it didn't seem to me that he'd ever grown any older. I understood him. I understood most men of his type. And I believed him. He was just blundering along in the world's horrible, mistaken idea of fun—that means death to the other one.

Before I knew it, my eyes brimmed full of tears. He saw that, and sat staring at me.

## CHAPTER XIV

I HAD gone wondering how I should see him at last, and what we should say to each other. It never once occurred to me that we might not meet again, or that when we did meet it would mean merely the casual renewing of a casual occasion. As for me everything moved from the time when I had met John Ember, so everything moved toward the time when I should see him again. I pictured meeting him on the street, at Mrs. Carney's house, about the university. I pictured him walking into a class room to give one of the afternoon lectures—older, his hair a little grayed, and yet so wonderfully the same as when he had spoken to me there on the country road. And I could imagine that if I said my name to him he would have to stop and hunt through his mind for any remembrance of that breakfast and that walk

which were, so far, the principal things that had ever happened to me.

Then I used to dream that he did remember.

"Mr. Ember, I'm Cosma Wākely. You won't remember—but I just wanted to say 'thank you' for what you did."

And: "Remember. My dear child, I've been looking for you ever since. Sit down—I want to talk with you."

Once I saw his picture in a magazine, looking so grave and serious, and I liked to know that there was that Katytown morning, and that I knew him in a way that none of the rest did; that I'd been with him on that lonely, early road and had heard him talk to me—no matter how stupid I'd acted—and that we'd sat together over breakfast in the yard of the Dew Drop Inn. Just in that I had one of the joys of a woman who loves a great man, and understands him as all those who sit and look up to him can never understand him. I felt as if something of me belonged to John Ember.

And when I did see him, it was as if he had never been away.

I had been twice to see Lena, and found her in the stale-smelling rooms of her aunt, each time at work upon some tawdry finery of her own. One day I thought about begging her to go with me to a gallery that I had found where hung a picture which it seemed to me must speak to her.

She went readily enough—she was always eager to go somewhere in a pathetic hope that some new excitement, adventure, would await her. We walked to the gallery, through the gay absorbed crowd on the avenue; and as we moved among them, the chattering gaiety with which we had left her aunt's, fell from her, the lines deepened about her mouth, and finally she fell silent.

Almost no one was in the little gallery. I led her to the central bench, and we sat down facing the picture that I had brought her to see: A woman in a muslin gown holding a child. I guessed how the Madonnas, in their exquisite absorption and in radiance and in crimson and blue would have for her little to say, as a woman to a woman. But this girl,

in the simple line and tone of every day, with a baby in her arms, seemed to me to hold a great fact, and to offer it.

Lena looked at her, and her face did not change. I waited, without saying anything, feeling certain that whatever I said she was in a mood to contradict. So she spoke first.

"It looks grand," she said, "till you think of the work of washin' and ironin' the baby's clothes. And her own. You can bet I shan't keep it in white."

"Look at the baby's hand," I said, "around her one finger."

It was at that moment that the owner of the little gallery came in, with a possible patron. They stood near us, looking at a landscape by the artist of the Madonna.

". . . a wise restraint," he was saying. "Restraint is easy enough—it is like closing one's mouth all the time. The thing is to close it wisely! It is not so much the things that he elects not to include in the composition as it is his particular fashion of omission—without self-consciousness, with no pride of choice.

## 232 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

I should say that of all the young artists now working in America, he comes the closest to giving place to the modern movements, seeing them as contributions but not often as ultimates—”

“I’m goin’,” said Lena.

I followed her. On the sidewalk, she tossed her head and laughed unpleasantly.

“No such talk as that guy was giving in mine,” she said. “He feels smart—that’s what ails him. Cossy, I hate folks like that. I hate ’em when they pretend to know so much. . . .”

“What if they do know, Lena?” I said.

“Then I don’t want to be with ’em,” she answered. “That’s easy, ain’t it? Sometimes I almost hate you. Ain’t they some store where they’s a basket of trimmin’ remnants we could look at?”

I took her to a shop, and she walked among the shining stuffs, forgetting me. She loved the gowns on the models. She felt contempt for no one who was dressed more beautifully than she—only for those who “knew more”



than she. I thought how surely beauty and not knowledge is the primal teacher, universally welcomed. Beauty is power.

But the remnant basket did not please her, and we stepped into the street to seek another shop. And standing beside a motor door, close to the way we passed, were Mrs. Carney and John Ember.

It was only for a moment, then the door shut upon them and they drove away. But I had seen him as I had dreamed him, a little older, but always in that brown, incomparable youth. He was bending his head to listen—that was the way I always thought of him. He was giving some unsmiling assent. He was here, and no longer across the world. I stood still, staring after the car.

"Gee, that was a swell blue coat," said Lena. "I don't blame you for standing stock-still. I bet I could copy that. . . . Come on!"

I went with her. But I hardly heard her stream of comment and bitter chatter. And yet it was not all of John Ember that I was thinking, nor was I filled only with my singing

## 234 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

consciousness that he was back. I was seeing again Mrs. Carney's face as she had turned to speak to him; glowing, relaxed, open like a flower.

Presently I was aware that Lena was not beside me. I looked and she was before the window of a shop. I crossed to her, and then I saw what she was looking at—no array of cheap blouses, price-marked, or of flaming plumes. She stood before the window of a children's outfitting shop.

I said nothing, nor did she. She looked, and I waited. The white things were exquisite and, I felt, remote. They were so dainty that I feared they would alienate her, because they were so much beyond her. But to my surprise, she turned to me:

"Could—could we go in here," she asked, "even if we didn't buy anything?"

We went in. Within the atmosphere was still more compact of delicate fabric and fashioning and color. An assured young woman came forward.

"Leave us look at some of your baby things," said Lena.

We looked. I shall never forget Lena's hands, ungloved, covered with rings and cheap blue and red stones, as those hands moved in and about the heaped-up fineness of the little garments. Of some of the things she did not know the names. The pink and blue crocheted sacks and socks brought her back to them again and again.

"I used to could crochet," she said at length.

But it was before a small white under-skirt that she made her real way of contact. She fingered the white simple trimming, and her look flew to mine.

"My God," she said, "that's 'three-and-five.' I can do that like lightning."

"Get some thread," I said, "and make some. . . ."

She had made nothing yet. She had told me that. Now she lifted and touched for a moment among the heaped-up things that they brought her.

## 236 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I've got five dollars," she said, "that I was savin' to get me a swell hat, when I go back. I might—"

I said nothing. It seemed to me that a great thing was happening and that Lena must do it alone. After a little I priced the dimities and muslins in her hearing.

"If you want to, Lena," I said, "you could come back to the flat and Mrs. Bingy would help you to make the things. . . ."

"Would five dollars get the cloth for two dresses and two skirts and some crochet wool? Some pink wool?" asked Lena.

So she bought these things, with the five dollars that hung about her neck in a little bag. As we went out the door, she saw a bassinet, all fine whiteness and flowered blue and lace edging.

"It's a clothes basket!" she cried excitedly. "Don't you see it is? What's the matter with me making one like that?" She turned to me, laughing as boisterously as I had heard her laugh in the Katytown post-office when more traveling men than usual were sitting outside

the door of the Katytown Commercial House. "Land," she said, "when I get back home, I bet I'll have everything but the baby!"

I sat beside her in the street-car, and she tried to make a hole in the paper of her parcel to see again the color of the wool she had bought for the little sack. There was thread, too, for the "three-and-five." Lena's eyes were bright and eager. She said little on the way home, and she made no objection to going with me to the flat. When we unrolled the parcel on Mrs. Bingy's dining-room table, and I saw Lena stooping and planning, I thought of the picture that we had left in the little gallery. There was a look in Lena's eyes that I had never seen there before. I heard Mrs. Bingy and her chattering happily over the patterns, and I thought that beauty has many ways of power.

Then, the next day, I had a telegram from Mrs. Carney.

"Come to see me to-day," she said. "Important."

I hurried to her, dreaming, as I had

dreamed all night, of whom I might find with her. But she was alone, and in some happy excitement that was beautifully becoming to her, who was usually so grave and absent.

"Cosma," she said, "what would you say to leaving the university before you have your degree?"

I knew that very well. "I would say," I said, "that I don't care two cents about the degree, if I can get the right position without it."

"I hoped you would say that!" she cried. "Then listen: John Ember has asked me to find a secretary for him. Will you go and try for the place?"

## CHAPTER XV

**H**IS library had not many books, not many pictures, and no curtains at all. The nine o'clock sun fell across the dull rugs, and some blue and green jars on a shelf shone out as if they were saying something. I waited for him at the hour of the appointment that Mrs. Carney had made for me. And for me some of the magic and the terror of the time were in that she had not told him who I was. When his little Japanese had gone to call him, I sat there in a happiness which made me over, which made the whole world seem like another place. I heard his step in the passage, and I wondered if I was going to be able to speak at all. I rather thought not, until the very moment that I tried.

He came toward me, bowing slightly, and motioning me to my chair. I looked at him, with a leaping expectation in my heart, and, I

am afraid, in my eyes. His own eyes met mine levelly, courteously, and without a sign of recognition.

"Now, let us see," he said briskly, and sat down before me. "About how much experience have you had?"

"I have never been anybody's secretary, if that is what you mean," I said, when I could.

"It is not in the least what I mean," he returned. "If you happen not to have been anybody's secretary, I am glad of it. I meant, 'What can you do?'"

"I can typewrite," I managed to tell him. "And almost always I can spell."

"That's good," he said, "though far from essential. Now what else?"

I thought for a moment. "I can keep still," I said. "I don't believe there's anything else I can do."

"That makes an admirable beginning," he observed gravely. "Do—do you take down all instructions? In notes?"

"I can, if you like," I said. "But I can never read my own notes."



"You don't do shorthand?" he cried.

For the first time, as I shook my head, it occurred to me that I might not meet his requirements.

"Well, now," he was saying, "that is good news. I was afraid you might come with a ruled note-book," he explained. "The flap kind."

"No," I said, "I begin at both ends of those. And then I never can find the notes."

"Precisely," he said. "Now about your head. Is it likely to ache every few minutes?"

"Only when I read the map in an automobile," I answered.

"Fortunately," he assured me, "there will be little of that in my requirements. Now the honest truth: Can you work hard? Can you work like a demon if you have to?"

"Yes. Unless it has figures in it," I said.

"It hasn't," he said. "Or at least, when it has, I shall have to do those myself, for my sins. But I warn you, there's some pretty stiff work ahead. It's a labor survey of China. And I want somebody to do ten hours a day

## 242 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

most of the time, showing how like dogs the Chinese workmen are treated."

Ten hours a day with him! I sat silent, trying to take in the magnitude of my joy.

"It's too much?" he hazarded.

"Oh!" I cried. "No. Why no!" He looked up inquiringly. "See the women in this town," I added, "who work ten hours a day and more."

"We're going to get along extremely well, then," he said, "if you don't mind my damned irritability—I beg your pardon. I'm shockingly irritable—but," he paused, leaning forward, still grave, "let me tell you, confidentially, now, that I always know it, underneath. You can't mind what I say too awfully, you know, if I put you in possession of that fact to start with. Can you?"

"I shan't mind," I said.

"Well, you will, you know," he warned me, "but that at least ought to help. I suppose it wouldn't be possible for you to go to work now? This moment?"

## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 243

"Yes, it would," I said, trying hard not to say it too joyfully.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Really? Without breaking an engagement? Or telephoning anybody? This is wonderful. Oh, by the way. Let me see your hand when you write."

He brought me a pad and pen and ink.

"Write anything," he said. "Write."

I wrote. He watched me absorbedly and drew a sigh that might have been relief.

"That's all right, too," he told me. "I had a young woman here helping me once who wrapped her fingers round the pen when she wrote, in a fashion that drove me mad. I used to go out and dig in the garden till my secretary had gone home, and then come in and get down to work myself."

I put away my hat, and merely to shut the door on the closet that held umbrellas and rain-coats was an intimacy that gave me joy. I had starved for him, thirsted for him, and two days ago had not known that he was not in

China still; yet here was this magic, as life knows so well to manufacture magic.

"I'm afraid I don't remember," he said, "what Mrs. Carney told me your name is?"

While we talked, it had been gradually fastening itself in my mind that it would have been remarkable if he had recognized me. A country girl, in a starched white dress, with her hair about her face, acting like a common creature on the Katytown road, and later, to his understanding working in a New York factory, could have no connection with a woman of twenty-six, in well-fitting clothes, who came to him six years after, as his secretary. I told him my last name, and he said it over as if it had been Smith.

In a corner of the library, by the window overlooking the little garden, he set me to sorting an incredible heap of notes, made illegibly on paper of varying sizes, unnumbered, but every sheet scrupulously dated. These covered two years and a half, and their arrangement was anything but chronological.

"Note-books have their uses," he admitted,

surveying that hopeless pile. "But not the flap kind," he added hastily.

I set to work, and as I touched the papers which had been with him all those days when I had seen the sun off for China, it seemed to me that I must tell somebody: "It's true then! Excepting for the misery in the world, you can be perfectly happy!" I had always doubted it. You do doubt it, until you have a moment of perfect happiness for your own. And this was the first one that I had ever known. He was at some proofs, and he promptly forgot my existence. After all these years, after the few rare glimpses of him which had been food for me and a kind of life, here I was where by lifting my eyes I could see him, where countless times a day I could hear him speak. Better than all this, and infinitely dearer, I was, however humbly, to help him in his work. I, Cosma Wakely, who, on a day, had tried to flirt with him.

I went at the notes fearfully. What if I could not understand them? There were gods, I knew, whose written word is all but measure-

less to man. I own that his notes were far from clear. Perhaps it was just because I so much wanted it that I understood them. Moreover, I found, to my intense delight, that I some way *felt* what he was writing. This I can not explain, but every one who loves some one will know how this is.

In half an hour he wheeled suddenly in his chair at the table. I caught, before he spoke, his look of almost boyish ruefulness.

"Miss Wakely," he said, "I beg your pardon like anything. What salary do you have?"

I felt my face turn crimson. This had occurred to me no more than it had to him.

When it was settled, he rose and came toward the corner where I worked, and stood looking down at me. For a moment I was certain that now he knew me.

"Miss Wakely," he said very gently, "may I ask you one thing more? Do you wear black sateen aprons?"

"I loathe all aprons," I said.

"And paper sleeve-shields, too?" he inquired earnestly. "Held by big rubber bands?"

"Paper sleeve-shields held by big rubber bands," I said, "I loathe even more than black sateen aprons."

"Well," he said, "do you know, there was one young woman once—" and he went back to his task obliviously.

At one o'clock I found a little tea-shop in the neighborhood, where food was scandalously high, after the manner of unassimilated tea-shops. I remember the clean little room, with a rose on my table and shelves of jelly over my head.

"How much better that is than some books," I said to the pink waitress, because I had to speak to somebody, so that I could smile. The world is not yet adjusted with that simplicity which permits one to sit in public places alone and, very happily, to smile. And this, I realized, was what I had been doing.

I was obliged to walk twice the transverse length of the blocks cut by the little studio street, before it was time to go back. As I was returning the second time, I came face to face with Mr. Ember carrying a paper sack.

## 248 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"Torchido," he explained, "lectures in a young ladies' seminary just at noon. It is not convenient for me. But I mind nothing so much as the fact that he will not let me have dried herrings. They—they offend Torchido. They do not offend me. So I go out and buy herrings of my own and hide them in the book-case. But he nearly always smells them out."

I wanted to say: "You can't buy anywhere such good ones as we used to have in Katytown." Instead, I said something in disparagement of Torchido's taste, and reflected on the immeasurable power of dried herrings in one human being's appeal to another.

I went back to work in my corner, and he ate herrings and buns, unabashed, at his library table. When I saw Torchido coming along the garden wall, I said: "Torchido—he's coming!" and Mr. Ember swept the remains of his lunch into the sack and dropped it into one of the glorious green-blue jars.

Torchido came in for orders, took them, stood for a moment plainly sniffing the air, pointedly opened a far window, and respect-



## A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING 249

fully retreated. Whereat the first faint smile that I had seen met my look, when the door had closed.

It was a heavenly day. It seemed to me that some heritage of my young girlhood had, after all, not quite escaped in all that sordid time, but had waited for me, let me catch it up and, now, enjoy it as I never could have enjoyed it then.

I walked home that night, in remembrance of that first miserable walk away from that studio, and because I like to be happy in the exact places where I have been miserable. I wanted to be alone for a little while, too, to think out what had happened. And all the way home that night, and all the evening when I did no work, the thing which kept recurring to me was the magic of a universe in which herrings and the absence of black sateen aprons permit immortal beings to draw a little nearer to each other.

The days were all happy. That combination of fellowship and its humor, together with a complete impersonality which yet ex-

## 250 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

quisitely takes account of all human personality and variously values it, was something which I had never before known in any man. I had not, in fact, known that it was in the world. It is exceedingly rare—yet. Most women die without knowing that it does occasionally exist. But it presages the thing which lies somewhere there, beyond the border of the present, beside which the spectacle of romantic love *without it* will be as absurd as chivalry itself.

I used to think, in those first days, how gloriously democratic love would make us—if we would let it. I understood history now—from the time of the first man and woman! Not a cave man, not a shepherd on the hills, not a knight in a tournament, but that I understood the woman who had loved him. It was astonishing, to have, all of a sudden, not only the Eloises and Helens clear to me—they have been clear to many—but also every little obscure woman who has ever watched for a man to come home. And it wasn't only that. It was that I understood so much better the woman of now. Women in cars and in busses,

shoppers, shop-women, artists, waitresses, char-women, "great" ladies—none of them could deceive me any more. No snobbery, no hauteur, no superiority, no simplicity could ever trap me into any belief that they and I were different. If they loved men, then I know them through and through.

"Mrs. Bingy," I said to her one night, "did you ever love Mr. Bingy much?"

She was re-setting the pins in her pillow and she looked over at me with careful attention.

"Well," she said, "they was a good many of us to home, you know; and I didn't have much to do with; and I really married Keddie to get a home. But of course, afterward I got fond of him. And then to think of us now!"

"But you really didn't love him when you married him?"

"No," she said. "It's a terrible thing to own up to."

And there again was the whole naked problem, as I had seen it for her, for Lena, for my mother, for all the women of Katytown,

## 252 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

for Mrs. Carney, for Rose. . . . What was the matter? When love was in the world for us all, when at some time every one of us shared it—what was the reason that it came to this? Or—as I had seen almost as often—to the model “happy” home, which often bred selfishness and oblivion?

Yet in those days I confess that I thought far less about these things than I did of the simple joy of being in that workroom where he was.

There was a day of rain early in June—of rain so intense and compelling that when lunch-time came I left in the midst of it, while Mr. Ember was out of the room, so that he should not be constrained to ask me to stay. When I came back he scolded me.

“You didn’t use good sense!” he said. “Why didn’t you?”

“I used all I had,” I replied with meekness.

“If that was all you had, you’d lose your job,” he grumbled. “Never go out from here again in such a rain as that. Do you hear?”

Torchido not yet having returned from his

lecture, Mr. Ember built up a cedar fire in the fireplace and made me dry my feet.

"I am going to make you a cup of tea," he said, "from some—"

"Don't tell me," I said, "that it's from the same kind that the emperor uses?"

"It is not," he replied. "This is another form of the same advertisement. This is some which was picked four hundred years ago."

"Oh," I said, "I dislike tea more than I can tell you. But I should like to drink a cup of that."

The stuff was horrible. It was not strong, but it had an unnamable puckering quality. I tasted it, and waited.

"Do you like it?" he asked eagerly.

"It is," I said, "the worst tea I have ever tasted in my whole life. I feel as if I had been shirred."

He burst into laughter.

"So I think," he said, "but lovely ladies drink it down and pretend to like it, just because I tell 'em what it is. I'm glad you hate it."

He held the tin over the coals.

"Shall I burn it?" he asked. "To the tune of 'What horrid humbugs lovely ladies are'?"

"Oh, no," I said, "give it to some old lady who will think it is just tea."

He nodded. "You have made the economically correct adjustment," he said. "And that is a good deal of a trick."

One morning when I went in, I found him sitting at his table pressing the tips of his fingers to his closed eyes.

"Good morning, Miss Wakely," he said. "These two tools of mine are rusting out. It's a nuisance just now, with the proof coming."

I said: "Couldn't I read it to you?"

"Frankly, I'm afraid not," he answered. "I belong to the half of mankind who can not be read to. I *think* that I couldn't bear it. But you may try."

He sat in a deep chair, with his back to the light, and I before him, with a little table for the proof. I read to him, doing my best to keep my mind on what I was reading. His

bigness, his gentleness, his abstraction, his humor were like a constant speaking presence, even when he was silent.

When I had read for ten minutes, he interrupted me.

"It's wonderful," he said. "You can do it. I'm trying to get at the reason. You don't over-emphasize. And yet your voice is so flexible that you aren't monotonous. And you don't plunge at every sentence, and come down hard on the first word, and taper off to nothing. If it keeps up, this is going to make me a terrible grafter, because I can't begin to pay you for what this will be worth to me."

"I'll stay as long as I can stand it!" I told him, trying to keep the happiness out of my eyes and my voice at the same time.

In a little while, the joyous sensation of what I was doing gave way to the interest in the reading itself. His book, I found, was a serious study of work in its relation to human growth. From the Hebraic conception of work as a curse to the present-day conception

## 256 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

of work as conscious cooperation in creation, in evolution, he was coming down the line, visiting all nations, entering all industries.

It was curious that, in those first days there never once passed between us any word of the great human problems in which we were both so excludingly interested. I understood that doubtless he had accustomed himself to saying very little about them, save when he knew that he would meet understanding. I had been at work for him more than a month before we ever talked at all, save the casual give-and-take of the day, and in occasional interludes, like the interludes of herrings and tea.

One morning we were copying some Chinese reports giving the total wages earned by men in seventy-year periods, and some totals to indicate their standards of living. Suddenly he said:

"Considering our civilization, and our culture and enlightenment-business, our own figures, proportionately to what we might make them with our resources, are blacker than the ex-empire's."



"You can't tell it in totals, though," I said. "You can't indicate in figures what is lost by low wages, any more than you can measure great works of genius by efficiency charts."

"You care about these things?" he asked.

"More than anything else," I answered.

After that, he talked to me sometimes about his work.

"I wish," he said once, "that I knew more about the working women. I'd like to get some of this off before a group of working women, and see how they'd take it."

"I could plan that for you," I said, "if you really mean it."

He looked at me curiously. "You are a remarkable little person," he observed. "Are there, then, things that you can't do?"

I went to see Rose back in the same factory, a little more worn, a little less hopeful, but still at her work among the girls. She welcomed the suggestion that he come to speak. He came for the next week's meeting.

"Rose," I said, "don't say anything to Mr. Ember about me."

Before that night came round, something happened. One morning, when Mr. Ember was going through his mail, he read one letter through twice.

"This one," he said, "I must take time to answer. My lecture bureau has gone into bankruptcy."

"Well," I said, "what of that? You don't need a bureau."

"It's not that," he said; "I own stock in it."

At noon he went out. When he came in his face was clear, and he went back to his proof. As I was leaving that night he spoke abruptly:

"Miss Wakely," he said, "I am sorry to have to tell you something—I am indeed. After this week I must not have you any more."

For this I was utterly unprepared. I looked up at him with all the terror and despair which filled me. "I'm not doing your work well?" I tried to say. But—"You're doing my work," he answered, "as I never hoped to have it done. It isn't that. It isn't only that this failure leaves me with very little money. There's thirty thou-

sand dollars owing to lecture and chautauqua people, and the company hasn't a cent."

"You mean," I said, "that you will help pay this thirty thousand?"

"There's no one else," he answered. "I'm the only stockholder who has anything at all. And the rest have families."

"Can they compel you to do this?" I asked. It is amazing how the brute instincts reappear in areas new to experience. I was civilized enough in some things, and yet instinctively I asked: "Can they compel you?"

He merely stood smiling down at me. "Most of the speakers are twenty-dollar-a-night men," he said. "They can't lose it, you see."

"I beg your pardon," I said, and went out to the street in a kind of glory. So he was like this!

That Saturday night he handed me my pay, with, "Good-by, Miss Wakely. I can't thank you—I really can't, you know."

"Good-by, Mr. Ember," I replied cheerfully, and went.

On Monday morning, when he came into

the workroom with his letters I sat there oiling the typewriter.

He stared at me. "Miss Wakely," he said in distress, "I must have muddled it awfully. I wasn't clear—"

"Yes," I said, "you were clear. But I thought I'd enjoy keeping on with the proof. May I have a clean cloth for the machine?"

He came over to the typewriter table, and stood looking down at me. I dared not look up, because I was worried about my eyes and what they might have to say. Then he put out his hand, and I gave him mine.

"I'm afraid I'll get typewriter oil on you," I said, "and it's smelly."

He went on with the letters without another word. There were two great envelopes of proof. He never could have got through them alone.

The night that he spoke to the girls, I went over early and slipped in the back seat. The hall was filled; I was glad of that. And as soon as he began speaking I saw that he knew how to talk to them. He was just talking to

them about the fundamental of human growth, and how the whole industrial struggle was nothing but the assertion of the right of the workers to growth. He showed this struggle as but one phase of something as wide as life.

"You want a better life, don't you?" he said. "You want to enjoy more, and know more and be more. And the people who can individually get these things by your toil you are set against. . . . But what are you working for? Food and clothes and a little fun? And your own children? I say that those of you who are working just for these things for yourselves are almost as bad as those who work for their own luxury. . . . What then? What are we working for? Why, to make the world where *all of us* can have a better life, and enjoy more, and know more, and be more. And we've got to do this together. And those of us who are not trying to raise the standard for *all of us*, whether employers or employees, are all out-laws together."

It was wonderful to see how he faced that audience of tired men and women, and kindled

them into human beings. It was wonderful to see the hope and then the belief and then the courage come quickening in their eyes, in their faces, in their applause. Afterward they went forward like one person to meet him, to take his hand. While they were with him, they became one person. It was almost as if they became, before his eyes, what he was there to tell them that they could go toward.

I had meant to slip out of the hall afterward. The last thing that I had meant to do was to walk down the aisle and put out my hand. Yet when he had finished, that was what I did.

"You liked it?" he said to me.

"I know it!" I told him.

"Ah, that's it," he answered. "Wait," he added.

So I waited until they had all spoken with him, and I wondered how any one could watch them and not understand them. One girl, new in the factory, came to him:

"Now you have showed me where I belong in my little life," she said to him in broken English. "Before, I felt as if I had been born

and then somebody had walked away and left me there. Now I see where I am, after all."

Afterward, Rose came to me, and her face was new. "If only we could keep them where they are now," she said. "But when they get hungry once, they forget it all."

Mr. Ember and I went down to the street. "Don't you want to walk home?" he said to me. And when we had left the push-carts and the noise, he turned to me in the still street:

"Now tell me?" he said. "How do you know those girls so well?"

I answered in genuine surprise. It seemed to me he must know.

"You!" he exclaimed. "Worked in a factory? At what? And when?"

I told him some of the things that I had done. He listened, and had no idea in the world that it was he who began it all for me. He smiled with me at my year with Miss Manners and Miss Spot. "And now what?" he asked.

"Now I'm secretary to you," I reminded him.

"You are not," he said, "you're an unpaid slave, being exploited for all you're worth, and you ought to be on strike this minute. Seriously," he added, "I can't go on this way. Don't you see that I can't allow it?"

"I beg your pardon," I said—and indeed I had hardly heard what he had been saying, for I was thinking: Here—walking along the street with me—John Ember, John Ember, *John Ember!*

"I'm saying," he observed, "that I discharge you from to-night."

"Look here, Mr. Ember," I said, "you can't discharge me—don't you understand! I've made up my mind to stay with you."

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "So you've made up your mind?"

"You mustn't be so selfish," I explained it. "You must think a little of me. Here you are, doing a big, fine work, work that interests me more than anything in the world. I've no other chance to help on, except through you and Rose. Why do you want to drive me out?"

"But, my child," he said, "if you don't mind



the practicality of the question, what are you living on?"

"Oh, that!" I said. "I pay my way by making Mrs. Bingy's lace."

He was silent for a moment. "You really want to?" he asked. "It isn't pity?"

"I really want to," I told him. "That's why I'm going to!"

He drew a deep breath. "Then that's settled," he said; "I own up to you. I didn't know how on earth I was going to get on without you!"

## CHAPTER XVI

SO there went on that relation for which this age has no name of its own: the relation of the man, as worker, and the "out-family" woman who is his helper. It is a new thing, for a new day. There has never been a time when its need was not recognized; but usually, if this need was filled at all, it had to be filled clandestinely. It used to be the courtezans who had the brains, or, at any rate, who used them. The "protected" woman, sunk in domestic drudgery, or in fashion and folly, or exquisitely absorbed in the rearing of her children, could not often share in her husband's work. And, too, in the new order, she is not necessary to share in her husband's work, for she is to have work of her own, sometimes like his and sometimes quite other. The function of the "out-family" woman is clearly defined.

And the relationship will be nothing that the wife of the future will fear.

It happened that I loved this man to whom I assumed the relationship of helper, and that I had loved him before I began to share his work. But it is true that, as the days went on, I began to dwell more on our work and less on my loving him. It was not that I loved him less. As I worked near him, and came to know him better, mind and heart, I loved him more but there was no time to think about that! All day we worked at his proof, his lectures, his correspondence with men and women, bent, as he was bent, on great issues. Gradually our hours of work lengthened, began earlier, lasted into the dusk; and I had the sense of definite service to a great end. Most of all I had this when I answered the letters from the workers themselves, for then it seemed to me that I went close to the moving of great tides.

"You speak for us—you say the thing we are too dumb to say. Maybe you are the one who is going to make people listen while we

## 268 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

breathe down here under their feet, when we can breathe at all."

Letters like this, misspelled, half in a foreign tongue, delivered by hand or coming across the continent, were a part of the work which had become my life. And all the breathlessness, the tremor, the delicious currents of those first days were less real than this new relation, deeper than anything which those first days had dreamed.

One day I had forgotten to go to luncheon and, some time after two, Torchido being absent to lecture at a young ladies' seminary, Mr. Ember came bringing me a tray himself.

"If any one was to do that you ought to have let me," I cried.

"Why?" he demanded. "Now, why? You mean because you're a woman!"

"Yes," I admitted, "I suppose that's what I did mean."

"You ought to be ashamed of that," he said, "you cave-woman. I don't believe you can cook, anyway."

"No," I owned, "I can't cook. And I don't want to cook."

"Yet you automatically assume the rôle the moment it presents itself," he charged. "It's always amazing. A man will pick up a woman's handkerchief, help her up a step which she can get up as well as he, walk on the outside of the walk to protect her from lord knows what—and yet the minute that a dish rattles anywhere, he retires, in content and lets her do the whole thing. We're a wondrous lot."

"Give us another million years," I begged. "We're coming along."

He served me, and ate something himself. And this was the first time that we had broken bread together since that morning at the Dew Drop Inn, when I had ordered salt pork and a piece of pie. Obviously, this was the time to tell him. . . . My heart began to beat. I played with the moment, thinking as I had thought a hundred times, how I would tell him. Suppose I said: "Do you imagine that this is the first time we have eaten together?" Or, "Do you remember the last time we sat

at table?" Or, "Have you ever wondered what became of Cosma Wakely?" I discarded them all, and just then I heard him saying:

"I like very well to see you eat, Mademoiselle Secretary. You do it with the tips of your fingers."

"Truly?" I cried. And suddenly my eyes brimmed with tears. I remembered Cossy Wakely and her peaches.

"What is it?" he asked quickly.

But I only said: "Oh, I was just thinking about the 'infinite improvability of the human race'!"

Then Lera was summoned home, and she begged me to go with her.

She had been for three months at Mrs. Bingy's, and a drawer of my bureau was filled with dainty clothes that, with Mrs. Bingy's help, she had made. We had contributed what we could, and all day long and for long evenings, she had sat contentedly at her work. But she kept putting off home-going, and one night she had told me the reason.

"Cossy," she said, "you remember how it

is there to Luke's folks' house—everybody scolding and jawing. And I know I'll be just like 'em. And it kind of seems as if, if I could stay here, where it's still and decent and good-natured, it might make some difference—to *it*."

On the morning that the message came to her, Mrs. Carney had come into Mr. Ember's workroom. Mr. Ember was out. A small portrait exhibit was being made at one of the galleries and, having promised, he had gone off savagely to see it on the exhibit's last day. It was then that Mrs. Bingy telephoned, in spasms of excitement over the telegram. Luke's mother had fallen and hurt her hip. Lena must come home.

"And, Cossy!" Mrs. Bingy shouted, "Lena thought—Lena wondered—Lena wants you should go with her."

I understood. Lena dreaded to face that household after her absence, even though she was returning with her precious work.

"I'll go," I told her; "I'll be there in an hour."

When I turned, Mrs. Carney sat leaning a little toward me, with an expression in her face that I did not know.

"Cosma," she said, "I want to tell you something—while John Ember is away. I have wanted you to know."

She had beautifully colored, and she was intensely grave.

"I've taken it for granted, dear," she said, "that you must know that I love him."

I stood staring down at her. "Mr. Ember?" I said, "Why, no! No!"

"Well, neither does he know," she said, "and I do not mean that he ever shall. I should of course be ashamed of loving Mr. Carney."

"Then why—why—" I began and stopped.

"Why do we keep on living together?" she asked. "I haven't the courage. And I have no property. And I have no way to earn my living—now. Cosma—I'm caught, bound. To love John Ember has made life bearable to me. Can you understand?"

Then she kissed me. "Cosma!" she said,



"I'm glad that you know. I've wanted you to know. For I was afraid that you had guessed, and that it might make a difference to you . . . when he tells you."

"Tells me. . . ." I repeated. "Tells me. . . ."

The blood came beating in my face and in my throat. Seeing this, she spoke on quietly about herself. We were sitting so when Mr. Ember came home. And I was struck by the exquisite dignity and beauty of her manner to him. She was like some one looking at him from some near-by plane, knowing that she might not touch him or speak to him—not because it was forbidden, but because they themselves were the law.

Then I looked at him, and I saw that he was looking at me strangely. There was a curious searching, meditative quality in his look which somehow terrified me. I sprang up.

"Mr. Ember," I said, "they want me to go home—there has been a telegram to a friend. I want to go with her. She needs me. . . ."

"Where is 'home'?" he asked only.

"In the country," I answered, and had on my wraps and was at the door. "I'll be back to-morrow," I told him.

Mrs. Carney had risen.

"Cosma!" she said clearly. "Wait. I'll drive you home."

As she spoke my name, my eyes flew to his. He was looking at me with a kind of soft brilliance in his face, and the surprise of some certainty. Then I knew that something had happened to make him know, and that now he remembered.

I ran out and down the walk before Mrs. Carney.

## CHAPTER XVII

**I**N the late afternoon light, Katytown looked to me beautiful: the weather-beaten station, the empty platform, the long, dusty main street, which informally became the country road without much change of habit. Lena and I took what Katytown called "the rig," and drove out to Luke's father's farm.

We went into the kitchen, and Luke's mother, helpless now in her chair, broke out at us shrilly: "Well, and about time, you good-for-nothing high-fly!" she welcomed her daughter-in-law.

Luke, eating his supper, shuffled up from the table and came toward her. Lena amazed me. She went to him and kissed him, not with a manner of apology, but of abstraction. Then she opened her suit-case. "Look, Luke," she said. "Look, Mother," and hardly heard the mother's talk, flowing on. Luke's mother watched her, lowering. Luke commented awk-

wardly, and went off to the barn. Lena turned to the sink, filled with unwashed dishes. The clatter of these, of faultfinding, the murk of steam received her. But she moved among these with a new dignity. It seemed as if life would have let Lena be so much, if only somebody had understood in time.

I left her, and walked toward my own home. But for that morning in Twiney's pasture, six years ago, I should be back there now, in Lena's place. For me, somebody had understood in time. Before I knew it, I had broken into swift running along the country road. I must somehow make everybody understand in time.

The house lay quiet in the dreaming sunshine. I stepped to the open kitchen door. They were at supper. My mother pushed back her chair and came running to the door.

"Cossy!" she cried. "Oh, Cossy! I mean Cosma."

"You call me whatever you want to," I said, and kissed her.

Bert and Henny came roaring out at me.

They filled the kitchen with their bodies and voices. Father kissed me. They sat with me, while Mother brought me some supper.

"Flossy dress, sis," Henny offered easily. "Day after to-morrow," he said, when I asked him when he was going back to his work. "We've got a committee to meet with a committee of the traction folks. We may be hot in it in another week." And when I asked, in what, he added: "Oh, we've got some fines and dockings and cuts in wages to fix up, and they're trying to make us pay more for our dynamite—you wouldn't understand."

I turned and looked at my brothers. For some reason, never until that moment had it occurred to me to count them in with those of us who were dreaming new dreams for labor. They had been simply my brothers, ugly, irritable, teasing. But they were laborers with whom, as strangers, I could make common cause. Bert's great figure and dead eyes and brutalized mouth were the figure and eyes and mouth of "The Puddler," which I had lately gone to an art gallery to see!

## 278 A DAUGHTER OF THE MORNING

"I tell you," Father said, "there's new times coming for you fellows, or I miss my guess. I say it every day when I read the papers."

So then we talked, Father and Henry and Bert and I. For the first time in our years together, we spoke of these matters and listened to one another. This was talk such as would have been impossible while I stayed there, either idle or drudging. Now I was a person, and we could exchange impressions. It came to me what family meetings might be, if each one were engaged in some happy, *chosen* toil, with its interests to exchange. And warm in me came welling and throbbing an understanding of them all, as fellow human beings, fellow workers, a relationship which the sense of family had hitherto obstructed and bound.

Presently Father and the boys went away.

"Let's sit down a while and talk," Mother said to me, turning her back on the dishes. "Shall we go in the parlor?" she asked.

I voted against the parlor, and we sat in the kitchen.

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"You've never once come up to the city, Mother," I said, "since I've been there. Won't you come some time? We could have a drive and a play."

"I've always wanted to go to the city again," she said; "I've always wanted to be there Sunday, and go to church in a big church." She looked out to see if Father was back. "Cossy," she said, "since you've been up there, have you seen much of any silverware?"

"Silverware?" I repeated.

"Not knives and forks. I mean pitchers—and coffee pots. I s'pose the houses you went to must use them common." And when I had answered, "I'd like to see some, some time, before I die," she said. "And I'd like to see a hothouse, with roses in winter."

"Come on then," I said. "We'll find some, Mother."

"The fare up and back is just exactly the fire-insurance money for three years," she said. "I always think of that."

Later, she went to baking pies, against the morrow. And she scolded somewhat about

the lamp wick that was too short, and the green wood on the fire and I went and hugged her, merely because I seemed to know so well what had always made her cross. For here was the same condition which we fought for the other workers: badly remunerated toil, which was not the real expression of the toiler; and no recreation.

That night I went up to my little old room, and nothing was changed. The little tintype of me was still stuck in the mirror. "Shall I sleep with you?" Mother said. I lay with my hand in hers, immersed in a new knowledge.

My family was dear to me—not on the old hypocritical basis which would have pretended to a nearness that it did not feel. But dear through the only real basis, a basis which we had persistently baffled and inhibited all the while that we lived together: human understanding.



## CHAPTER XVIII

I HAD planned to be back in the city by noon the next day. But there was something that I wanted to do before I left Katytown. I wanted to go into the little grove which, far more than the up-stairs place where I slept, had always seemed to me to be "my room." I went there after our early breakfast. The place was considerably thinned, but it was still sanctuary.

When I reached the fence by the road, I went over it in the old way. As I went, I was conscious that some one, somewhere, was singing. As I struck into the road, the low humming which I had heard was mounting. And then it lifted suddenly into the words of its song. The man who was singing it had just passed, and he had his face set from me. But I knew him, as I knew his song. Then the time and the hour swept over me, and I sang with him:

"Oh, Mother dear, Jerusalem, Thy joys  
when shall I see. . . ."

He wheeled, and stood still in the road and let me come to him. And the song broke off, and he was saying:

"Cosma! Cosma Wakely! I've come to scold you!"

"It was such fun!" I pleaded.

"But so to take in a near-sighted old gentleman who goes out of his mind trying to remember any of the thousand faces he sees in a year of lectures—ah, it was too bad. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was trying to get made over," I said. "And I'm not made over yet. You had no right to find me out! How did you find me out?"

"I went to that gallery," he explained, "yesterday. And there I saw Gerald Massy's portrait of you—and underneath he has, you know, set 'Cosma.' I have never forgotten that name—how could I? So I came galloping home to accuse you. And there sat Mrs. Car-

ney calling you 'Cosma,' before my eyes. What I can't understand," he ended savagely, "is how I can have been so dumb. Now, tell me—tell me!"

We were walking in the road, which had somehow assumed a docile and appeased look, like something which we were stroking as it was meant to be stroked. And I told him the rest, beginning with the hour that he had left me in Twiney's pasture. And so we came to Twiney's pasture again.

We broke through the wet sedge, and went over the fence as we had gone that other morning. And presently we stood at the top of the hill from which he had first shown me the whole world.

Then I did my best to tell him. "Mr. Ember!" I said, "all the little bit I've been able to make out of myself, you've made. I want to tell you that—and I'm not telling it at all!" I cried.

He stood as he had stood before, with the sky's great blue behind him. And he said:

"Then just don't bother with it. Besides,

I've something far more important to try to say to you—the best I know how. Cosma—will you marry me?"

In those first days, I had sometimes dreamed of his saying that—dreamed it hopelessly; but sometimes, too, I had sunk warm in the thought of it, as if there all thought had come home. Yet now, when he actually said it, it came to me with a great shock. And out of the fulness of what I suddenly read in my heart, I answered him:

"Why, I can't marry you," I said. "I can't give up my work with you!"

He looked down at me gravely, and he made me the answer of all men.

"Give up the work! But the work together is one of the reasons why I love you."

"I can see that," I said. "And the work together is one of the reasons I love you. But—"

He put out his arms then, and took me.

"You said you loved me!" he said.

"I do," I said, "why of course I do—"

And when he kissed me it was as if nothing



"Will you come and face it with me?"



new had happened, but only something which was already ours.

"Then what is it," he asked, "but you for me, and me for you?"

And I cried, "Oh, don't you see? That after being what I've been to you—knowing your work and your thought—I can't stop it and be just your wife? I can't exchange this for looking after your house and ordering your food, and sending off the laundry and keeping your clothes mended?"

"But, my child—" he began.

"I know what you mean," I told him, "you think it wouldn't be that way. You think we'd go on as we are. We wouldn't—we wouldn't. All those things have to be done—I'd be the one to do them. It would be I who would begin to play myself false, I who would begin to do all the little housewifely things that other women do. It would get me—it would eat up my time and my real work with you—I tell you it would get me in the end! It gets every woman!"

"Well," he said again, "what then?"

I saw his eyes, understanding, humorous, tender. "Don't!" I cried; "it's almost got me now—when you look at me like that."

"Well," he said again, "what then?"

"Oh, don't you see?" I cried, "I've got myself to fight. I care now for big issues—for life and death and the workers—for the future more than for now. We are working for them—you and I. I will not let myself care only for getting your food and keeping the house tidy!"

He looked away over the fields, and by his eyes I thought that now I had lost him for good and all. But he only said:

"To think what we have done to love—all of us. Of course I know that the possibility is exactly what you say it is."

"Not the possibility," I said, "the inevitability. Look at all of them down there—Mother, Lena, Luke's mother, every woman in Katytown—and most of them everywhere else. They're all prostituted to housework. Don't let me do it! You've saved me this far—you've helped me to be the little that I've made



of myself. Now help me! And," I added, "you'll *have* to help me. For I want to do it!"

He put out his hand, not like a lover, but like a comrade. And when I gave him mine, he shook it, like a friend.

"I will help you," he said. "Here's my hand on it. And it strikes me that this is about the most poignant appeal that a woman can make to a man. To his chivalry, if you like!"

And then I said the rest: "And you must see—I'm not a mother-woman. I should love children—to have them, to give them every free chance to grow. But it would be the same with them: their sewing, their mending, a good deal of the care of them—I don't know about it, and I shouldn't like it. I shouldn't be wise about their feeding, or the care of them if they were sick. And as for saying that the knowledge comes with the physical birth of the child, that's sheer nonsense."

"Oh, utter nonsense," he agreed. "Yes, I know you're not a 'mother-woman,' in the sense that means a nurse. Many women are not who are afraid to acknowledge it. But

you'd give strength and health to your children—you're fitted to bring them into the world—you'd love them, and all children."

And this was thrillingly true for me. "What I really want to do," I said, "is to help make the world a home for all children—to make life—and their birth—normal and healthful and right, my own children included."

"You're the new factor that we've got to deal with, Cosma," he said, "the mother-to-the-race woman. A woman whose passion for the children of the race isn't necessarily to be confused with a passion for keeping their ears clean. It's something that we've all got to work out together. . . ." He broke off, and cried out to me, "Cosma! Are you willing that we shall let this beat us?"

I looked up at him.

"It's something that has to be worked out," he repeated. "All that you've been saying—it's got to be worked out for all women. Well, it's not going to be done by every womanfunking it, and staying unmarried."

He put his hands on my shoulders and looked into my eyes.

"Are you sure," he said, "that I understand? That from the bottom of my heart I know and feel what you've been saying? And that I'll do the best I can to help you work it out?"

"Yes," I said, "I'm sure of that."

I was intensely sure of him—sure that we looked at life with the same love for the same kind of living.

"Will you come?" he cried. "Will you come and face it with me? And do your best, somehow, to work it out with me?"

His arms drew me, and in them was home. And for my life I could not have told whether I went to meet his challenge, or whether I went because we were each other's in the ancient way.

THE END